

# Bear Husbandry and Habitat



## Why is the environment important to bear health and well-being?

All bear species dig, climb, swim, and den. Offering bears ways to engage in these natural behaviors is crucial to their health and well-being in captivity.



### DIG

#### NATURAL SUBSTRATE

- Allows bears to dig
- Is softer and easier on joints
- Enables bears to build nests from leaves and branches
- Encourages bears to explore when there's a variety of substrates



#### PRACTICAL TIP



Soil, grass, gravel, sand, leaves, hay, and mulch are good substrate options to use in bear enclosures.

### CLIMB

#### CLIMBING STRUCTURES

- Create opportunities for exercise and exploration
- Create high vantage points for bears to rest, offering both enrichment and a sense of security



### SWIM

#### WATER FEATURES

- Allow swimming or bathing
- Help bears regulate their body temperature
- Promote play and overall movement



### DEN

#### QUICK TIPS

- Individual dens for adult bears help reduce aggression and competition
- Proper bedding in dens increases bears' comfort and well-being
- Comfortable temperatures in dens are vital for bears' health

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Bears use marking as a way to communicate with other animals by both sight and smell.

### HABITAT

Allowing bears access to **areas that are shady throughout the day** helps bears to cool off and maintain comfortable temperatures.

**Visual barriers or partitions** offer privacy, increase bears' sense of security, and minimize aggression.

**Logs or structures** allow bears to scratch, rub, mark, or forage for insects. These are all natural, motivated behaviors.



This Animal Care Aid is part of a series developed to provide information about bear health and care. Refer to the other topics covered in the series for more information on bear care.

Questions? Email us at [CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov](mailto:CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

