

A Tall Task: Exploring Strategies for Increasing Giraffe Participation at Feeding Encounters

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Giraffe feeding encounters are interactive activities in many zoos that increase opportunities for giraffes to display natural feeding behaviors. Participation in these encounters is a choice for the giraffe, so it can be difficult to maintain. There is little evidence from prior research on motivations to engage in feeding behavior and how to increase participation and if these encounters have any effects on the giraffe's behavior. We observed the behavior of eight reticulated giraffes (*Giraffa reticulata*) at Tanganyika Wildlife Park in Goddard, Kansas and compared the giraffes that participated and their behavior on days where encounters took place regularly or when they were altered. Treatment A tested the effect of feeding browse at the encounters, Treatment B tested the effects of setting up more than one feeding station, and Treatment C tested the effects of feeding browse combined with having multiple feeding stations. Participation was measured through the amount of time the giraffe spent engaged at the station. We found that the combination of using browse and creating more encounters allowed more giraffes to participate. We hypothesized that feeding browse and reducing spatial competition caused giraffe participation to increase because we are making a more desirable environment for the giraffes. Our findings can help inform other institutions on how to find the preferred encounter set up to increase giraffe participation as well as decrease stereotypic behaviors.