

## Zoo Keeper

Zoo keepers look after animals in zoos, wildlife parks and safari parks. They care for a diverse range of animals from large and dangerous to rare and exotic.

### The Work

You could be:

- cleaning enclosures and changing bedding
- preparing food and feeding the animals
- making sure animal enclosures are as close to natural conditions as possible
- checking animals for illness or injury and helping to treat them when they are not well
- carrying out basic maintenance on animal enclosures to ensure the safety of animals and visitors
- patrolling the park, making sure visitors are safe and the animals are not disturbed
- helping to breed animals
- responsible for a particular section of the zoo or park or for certain types of animals, such as primates or reptiles
- answering questions from visitors and giving talks to schoolchildren and others.

### Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Salaries for trainee zoo keepers at entry level are around £13,000 to £16,000 a year. Qualified keepers can earn around £16,000 to £20,000 a year, while senior keepers earn up to around £22,000 a year. Head keepers can earn up to £32,000 a year.

### Conditions

- You would work both indoors, sometimes in tropically heated enclosures, and outdoors, in all weather.
- The work is physically hard – there is a lot of bending, stretching, lifting and carrying.
- It can be dirty, smelly and noisy.
- Some animals can be dangerous and there can be the risk of attack, although you would rarely come into direct contact with large exotic breeds, such as lions and rhinos.
- You may have to work shifts, with early starts and late finishes, especially in summer when zoos and wildlife parks are open for longer.
- Weekend work is normally necessary.
- You may need to wear protective clothing, and a uniform may also be provided.

## Getting In

- There is a lot of competition for vacancies.
- Previous experience of work with animals – voluntary work or a holiday job in a zoo, kennel, farm or stable – is important if not essential.
- A good standard of general education is useful. Some employers may prefer you to have some subjects at National 4 or 5, especially English, Maths and science subjects.
- You can take a full time college course before starting work. There are courses in animal care available at National Certificate (NC), Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diploma (HND) levels.
- Entry requirements for an NC vary from no formal requirements up to 4 subjects at National 4 or 5. The HNC and HND require 1-2 Highers or an NC in animal care.
- You may need a full, clean driving licence, particularly for a wildlife or safari park.
- You need to be fit enough to do an active job.

## What Does It Take

You need to be:

- dedicated
- passionate about animal welfare and conservation
- confident about dealing with both large and small animals
- reliable and responsible
- safety conscious
- observant
- able to communicate with visitors, both children and adults, and to answer questions
- physically fit
- able to deal with unpleasant conditions and not be squeamish.

## Training

- You would normally train on the job alongside an experienced keeper.
- This may be combined with part time attendance at college for a relevant Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) or an NC or HNC.
- If you are on a Modern Apprenticeship, you would normally train for a relevant SVQ such as Animal Care at SCQF Levels 5 and 6.
- You could do a Foundation Degree in Zoo Management at Reaseheath College in Nantwich, Cheshire.
- You could do the 2 year Diploma in Management of Zoo and Aquarium Animals, offered by Sparsholt College (Hampshire) and the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA). This is distance learning, with a 5 day residence at Sparsholt College. You need to be working in a zoo or aquarium due to the practical elements of the course.

## Getting On

- In larger zoos and parks, there can be promotion opportunities to posts such as senior keeper or head keeper.
- You could become specialised in looking after one kind of animal.

- It can help if you are able to move around the country for job opportunities.

## Contacts

### **Association of British and Irish Wild Animal Keepers (ABWAK)**

Email: [info@abwak.org](mailto:info@abwak.org)

Website: [www.abwak.org](http://www.abwak.org)

Twitter: @ABWAK

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/pages/ABWAK/227825486277](https://www.facebook.com/pages/ABWAK/227825486277)

### **British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA)**

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Website: [www.biaza.org.uk](http://www.biaza.org.uk)

Twitter: @BIAZA

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/biazaofficial](https://www.facebook.com/biazaofficial)

### **College of Animal Welfare**

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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/CAWInfo](https://www.facebook.com/CAWInfo)

### **Lantra Scotland**

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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/lantrascotland](https://www.facebook.com/lantrascotland)

### **Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS)**

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Twitter: @rzss

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/RZSSofficial](https://www.facebook.com/RZSSofficial)

### **Zoological Society of London (ZSL)**

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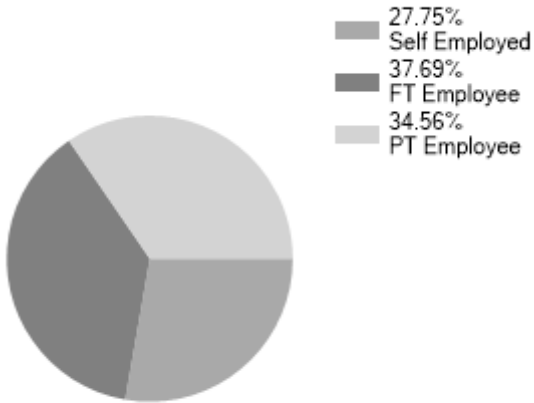
Website: [www.zsl.org](http://www.zsl.org)

Twitter: @OfficialZSL

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/officialzsl](https://www.facebook.com/officialzsl)

Statistics

Employment Status UK %



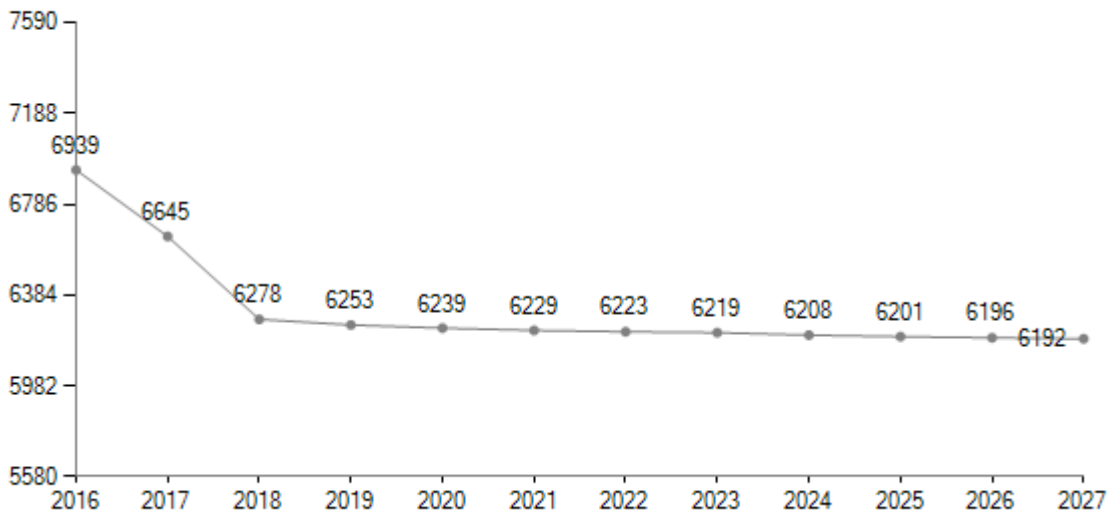
Past Unemployment - Scotland

Date	Unemployed
Dec 2018	0.27%
Mar 2019	0.27%
Jun 2019	0.19%
Sep 2019	0.17%

LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)