



FAQ ABOUT BRADLEY, THE SANTA BARBARA ZOO AMBASSADOR DOG



Bradley is now in training, and is not part of scheduled programs until he “graduates.”

Why is there a dog at the Zoo?

Bradley training to be an ambassador dog. His “job” is to connect with our guests, young and old, to encourage empathy for animals, and to help guests care about animals at home and in the wild. He’ll also aid the public’s understanding of our dedication to the welfare of all our animals, including their care, training, and enrichment.

What will Bradley do as an ambassador dog?

If training goes as hoped, he’ll participate in keeper talks on subjects like responsible pet choices and animal training using positive reinforcement. He may participate in education programs such as Zoo Camp. He might provide outreach to local schools, retirement homes, hospitals, and elsewhere. All this depends on Bradley and how he responds. He is still young and learning.

When and where can I see Bradley?

Currently, Bradley is visible rarely and not on a regular schedule. He can sometimes be sighted on the balcony over the Gift Store overlooking the Zoo’s entrance, as it is being used as an open-air enclosure. He has a fenced dog run and play area on Cabrillo Lawn, across from Cats of Africa.

Can my child or I pet Bradley?

With nearly half-a-million visitors each year, it would be overwhelming if everyone tried to pet Bradley. We ask that you do not allow your children to run up to Bradley, as he is still in training. Bradley’s trainer will let you know if and when he can be approached.

ABOUT BRADLEY SPECIFICALLY

What kind of dog is Bradley and how old is he?

Bradley is an English Cream Golden Retriever. The “English Cream” refers to the light color of his fur. He was born on May 12, 2018.

Is Bradley a rescue dog? Where did he come from?

Bradley’s original family lived in Northridge and had him as a young puppy. An unexpected medical development made it impossible for them to care for a rambunctious puppy. The Zoo adopted him when he was nine months old.

Where does Bradley sleep?

Bradley’s sleeping area is in a temperature-controlled office. He is busy during the day, so by the end of the day he is tired and settles in to sleep. He has been sleeping on his own since he was a young puppy. The security guard checks on him several times in the night and gives Bradley toilet breaks. The first few weeks at the Zoo, Bradley was also monitored by video (and by the security guard). Bradley’s welfare is the Zoo’s top priority, and other arrangements would have been made if he had not settled in so well. He cannot go home with keepers due to quarantine issues.

Can Bradley run off-leash?

Bradley has a fenced exercise and play area on Cabrillo Lawn, across from Cats of Africa, where he is allowed to run free and have play dates with specially selected dogs. As a break from training, he also has “Sniff Time” while on the leash, when he is allowed to follow his nose and explore the Zoo.

Does Bradley leave the Zoo?

Bradley currently stays at the Zoo while he is being trained. It is hoped that he will make visits to local schools, retirement homes, hospitals, and community events, but that depends on his training.

ABOUT BRADLEY’S TRAINING

What traits did you look for in a potential ambassador dog?

This dog needs to be comfortable with multiple handlers, and have an enthusiastic and engaging personality. The dog also must be cooperative in social situations, and be safe around Zoo guests, including young children. We needed a dog who could be trained to be around high sensory output, large crowds, loud noises and constantly changing environments.

Why did the Zoo choose Bradley to be the ambassador dog?

Zoo staff spent six months visiting dog rescue facilities and following leads for a dog with the right temperament to be trained as our ambassador. We even have a job description for our Ambassador Dog. Bradley was a good fit.

What training method is being used with Bradley?

As with the Zoo’s other animal residents, Bradley is trained using positive reinforcement, meaning he is rewarded for good behaviors and following instructions, and ignored or redirected for negative behaviors. The goal is to guide him into making the right choices on his own.

Who is training Bradley?

The Zoo has retained a professional dog trainer who works with Bradley most days and is training specific staff to work with him as well. You may see this trainer or uniformed keeper staff working with Bradley.

How long will it take for Bradley to be trained?

Bradley is still a puppy and learning new behaviors. Training is currently going well, but will last as long as needed. Some training will continue indefinitely, to keep Bradley engaged as an ambassador dog.

ABOUT BRADLEY & OTHER ANIMALS

Can I bring my dog to play with Bradley?

Only certain pre-screened and pre-approved dogs can visit Bradley at the Zoo. Those dogs already have been selected and no additional dogs are needed.

Can I bring my dog to the Zoo?

Pets, emotional support animals, comfort animals, and therapy dogs are not allowed for the protection of the animals at the Zoo. Service animals are allowed if they meet ADA’s definition as “a dog that has been individually trained to assist a person with a disability.”

How do the Zoo animals react to Bradley? How does Bradley react to the Zoo animals?

Zoo animals are not unfamiliar with dogs, as service dogs sometimes accompany guests. However, his presence does help reinforce that the sight or smell of a dog is normal. So, far Bradley has responded well to the zoo animals by remaining calm in their presence. Acclimating him to the other animals that live at the zoo is part of his training.

Does Bradley go in with any of the Zoo's other animals?

While dogs are sometimes used as companion animals for specific species, Bradley does not go into any animal enclosures.