



Personal Protective Equipment

The RightCycle™ Program and Dallas Zoo Work Together to Recycle Disposable Gloves

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The Dallas Zoo partnered with The RightCycle™ Program to create a better world for animals by recycling disposable nitrile gloves that might be used for animal care, cleaning, and food preparation.

For staffers at the Dallas Zoo, disposable nitrile gloves help ensure quality and safety when they care for and feed more than 2,000 animals at the zoo. Through The RightCycle Program, the zoo also has expanded the overall impact of its sustainability efforts by providing a safe, renewable way to dispose of these gloves.

The RightCycle Program works with universities, research and manufacturing facilities, zoos and a variety of other businesses to take hard-to-recycle products, such as used gloves, protective apparel and safety eyewear, and convert them into new consumer goods. For the Dallas Zoo, it estimates that it has been able to divert more than 1,000 pounds of gloves since starting the program in 2018, "roughly the weight of one of its female giraffes".¹

"When these gloves go to a landfill, they can be consumed by wildlife or they can wind up in our oceans and harm marine life."

Shannon College

Dallas Zoo animal supervisor

Keeping plastic waste out of the environment is an integral part of the zoo's commitment to create a better world for animals. That's why the zoo partnered with The RightCycle Program to recycle their disposable gloves.

"Kimberly-Clark has a long relationship with the Dallas Zoo through our support of numerous conservation efforts and of course, making products to help keep the Dallas Zoo staff and animals healthy and safe. But the real pride for us is to partner with the zoo on a program that provides such a tangible contribution to their mission to create a better world for animals," said Jennifer Shaffer, The RightCycle Program manager for Kimberly-Clark Professional.

For the Dallas Zoo, participating in the program isn't just about recycling waste from its own facilities, it's also about modeling responsible environmental practices to inspire others.

"We enjoy being able to show our guests various ways to change their behavior," College said. "For example, a lot of our zoologists wear the gloves during animal encounters, and they say to guests, 'This is one more way that that we're creating a better world for animals.' We wear these gloves and we recycle them."

The Results

The RightCycle Program has been enthusiastically received by both zoo employees and visitors. In addition to telling visitors about the program, the zoo shows guests what happens to the gloves after they are recycled.

"We purchased plastic flowerpots to show how used gloves go to The RightCycle Program to be turned into plastic products like the ones guests see around the zoo, with plants that benefit local pollinators, and herbs that we use as scent enrichment activities for our animals," College said.

"And our guests are super-impressed. They don't realize that glove recycling is an option. They appreciate the extra steps we take to make these changes and see us at the forefront of a program that is redirecting a large volume of waste in such a utilized way."

The RightCycle Program is the first large-scale recycling initiative in the scientific and industrial products industries for non-hazardous laboratory gloves, single-use apparel and safety eyewear. The used products are transformed into flowerpots, shelving, lawn and garden furniture and other goods by U.S. manufacturers. Since 2011, the program has helped zoos, aquariums, universities, research facilities, and a range of businesses divert more than 830 tons of waste from landfills.

Previously Featured on Kimberly-Clark Professional's Workplace Insights.

¹ Potter, P. (2019, July 29). Kimberly-Clark 'RightCycles' a Giraffe's Worth of Nitrile Gloves from Dallas Zoo. Retrieved from <https://dallasinnovates.com>

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