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Abstract: No adverse effects were noted for the cheetah when moved outside although winter temperatures reached a low of 12°C. They proved perfectly adaptable and even seemed to enjoy the snow.

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## Some notes on the climatic adaptability of large cats in captivity

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Most zoological parks have traditionally provided the large cats with heated winter quarters. Due principally to a lack of funds, Baltimore Zoo has never had heated cages for cats. Since about 1900, lions *Panthera leo*, tigers *Panthera tigris*, leopards *Panthera pardus* and of course, pumas *Felis concolor* have been kept captive in un-heated enclosures. Because most of these cats are at present consistently successful breeders, it may be assumed that they have adapted well to the climatic conditions of Baltimore. The average winter low temperature in Baltimore is about  $-4^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $25^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) with extreme low temperatures down to  $-22^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-7^{\circ}\text{F}$ ).

Recently, jaguars *Panthera onca* and cheetahs *Acinonyx jubatus* have been added to our collection. At first these animals were kept in the heated Mammal House because it was felt they were too delicate to survive Baltimore's winters. However, in the early autumn of 1968, both the cheetahs and jaguars were moved outside into the large cat section. Although winter temperatures

reached a low of  $12^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $10^{\circ}\text{F}$ ), no adverse effects were noted in either species. In particular, concern had been felt as to whether the cheetahs could survive the rigours of winter in Baltimore; however, they proved perfectly adaptable and even seemed to enjoy the snow.

The large cat facility at the zoo consists of a group of enclosures, each with an outside yard measuring about 7.9 m (26 ft) long by 3.9 m (13 ft) wide, and a den measuring about  $2.4 \times 3 \times 2.4$  m ( $8 \times 10 \times 8$  ft) constructed of concrete with walls 30.5 cm (12 in) thick. Each animal is provided with a wood pallet, on which its bedding is placed. The enclosures normally house one pair of animals. All the cats are allowed outside daily in any weather, but they are locked in the unheated concrete dens at night. Shredded newspaper has proven to be the best and least expensive bedding material.

No specific dietary changes are made in preparation for the cold weather, although food intake does generally increase slightly.