

# WILD ABOUT SECURITY

Integrated video surveillance keeps animals, visitors safe and secure

By Courtney Pedersen

**A**kron Zoo, based in Ohio, started as a children's zoo in 1953, as an addition to an existing museum of natural history. During its 58-year history, the facility has changed drastically, doubling in size and adding innovative exhibits featuring animals such as penguins, lions, Komodo dragons, tigers, bears and red pandas.

The Akron Zoo is a private, non-profit organization focusing on wildlife preservation and conservation education. It is one of the highest-attended attractions in Summit County. Today the zoo has about 105 employees and the entire park comprises more than 50 acres (about 200 km<sup>2</sup>), which includes exhibits and undeveloped land. With such an expansive area, and with more than 700 animals to manage, the Akron Zoo has opted for video surveillance as a cost-effective and practical means to monitor animal health and behavior.

Zoo officials chose Milestone XProtect® Professional video management software (VMS). They initially installed version 6.5 but reported that when they later put in version 7.0, the improvement was “really unbelievable” and the installation and operation were “very easy and self-explanatory.”


Other technical specifications for the surveillance installation include a Windows® server with a large storage device and a mix of Axis and Mobotix video cameras (specifically, Axis 213 PTZ, Axis 214 PTZ, Axis P3344-VE, and Mobotix Q24MSEC). MobileCamViewer from mobiDEOS provides wireless/remote access to veterinarians to monitor animals from home or wherever they are, without having to be stationed in front of their computers.

MobileCamViewer is used on BlackBerry devices through a special integration

made possible with the Milestone Software Development Kit (SDK). The SDK is based on an open-platform programming interface, which allows third-party integrators such as mobiDEOS to add their own functionality with ease.

The surveillance solution is used primarily to observe, rather than to alert, and its advantages are numerous. From a veterinary perspective, it is useful because it minimizes physical human intervention and allows staff to remotely observe animals' natural behavior. It minimizes unnecessary stress, and ill or birthing animals can easily be observed.

Each animal holding area has a display monitor outside the door that displays a live video feed from various views inside the area, so keepers can check proper containment and location of potentially dangerous animals before entering, increasing general human safety and ensuring that animals are not inadvertently startled. When animals become ill, the video can be viewed to determine the cause—and with the mobile solution, veterinarians can observe sick animals before arriving at the site.

The Milestone Smart Client user interface is used mostly by supervisors and veterinarians, and, according to zoo management, no one needed training in order to use it; on the contrary, they added, the system is very user-friendly and a good fit for a site where security issues are sometimes beastly. 

*Courtney Pedersen is the public relations director for Milestone Systems. She can be reached at [CDP@milestonesys.com](mailto:CDP@milestonesys.com).*

