

May 4, 2020

Re: welfare issues at Project Chimps

Dear Project Chimps Board of Directors,

We are writing to you as a collective of concerned former and current Project Chimp employees, volunteers, interns, and donors to bring serious welfare issues at Project Chimps to your attention. Our motive is strictly to improve the stewardship of the organization and the care and welfare the chimpanzees whose care is entrusted to the sanctuary, values we are certain that you, as a board member, share. The signatories of this letter have worked for Project Chimps during different time periods, from 2014 through the present. We include caregivers, veterinarians, veterinary assistants, and a primatologist with extensive and wide-ranging chimpanzee experience at numerous professional sanctuaries and care facilities, as well as in the wild. Many of us have never met or worked together prior to collaborating on this letter. Like you, we all have in some way devoted our lives, fully or in part, to chimpanzee welfare.

Up until this point, multiple former employees (from 2016-present) have brought forth concerns following the appropriate reporting channels, but resolutions have often not been provided, concerns have been dismissed without investigation and/or actions insufficient to resolve the claims have been taken. Those who have raised issues have also been retaliated against, asked to resign, or have been fired. **At this point, we are requesting the opportunity to have the entire Board hear about our concerns, unfiltered, from our chosen ambassadors directly via a virtual meeting.**

Our fundamental concern is that the chimpanzee residents are not receiving the high quality of care that accredited sanctuaries, especially those affiliated with HSUS, should demand; in many cases, the chimpanzees are actually suffering. Alarming, many have worsened body condition scores, show signs of deteriorating health, and exhibit increased stereotypic behaviors relative to when they first arrived from the research facilities. Below we briefly outline our repeatedly reported welfare concerns.

- Inadequate and negligent veterinary care, currently consisting of a part-time small animal veterinarian with no previous chimpanzee experience or advanced training in chimpanzee medicine. Project Chimps has a state-of-the-art on-site veterinary clinic, equipped to safely provide comprehensive veterinary care to this particular patient population. Unfortunately, the veterinary care provided fails to meet even minimum standards of care. Veterinary concerns include: lack of a comprehensive health care program for prevention and early detection of health problems; no measures taken to monitor or treat chimpanzees experimentally infected with viral hepatitis, despite lifelong increased risk of cancer, amyloidosis, and other potentially fatal diseases; failure to take any measures to prevent transmission of these viruses to uninfected group members; lack of adequate wound care; lack of medical work-up, monitoring, and treatment of known medical conditions; failure to prepare for and recognize clinical emergencies; inadequate pain management; failure to provide safe conditions for inducing anesthesia; failure to provide routine dental care despite available equipment; and failure to collaborate with veterinary specialists with expertise in chimpanzee medicine, who have repeatedly offered their *pro bono* assistance.
- Poor diet – inappropriate diet composition, insufficient produce, moldy food, poor quality chow, failure to follow veterinary nutritionists' recommendations for diet planning, etc.
- Global increase in stereotypic and other abnormal behaviors, e.g., coprophagy, alopecia due to hair plucking, rocking, banging, and pacing. Management disregarded the recommendations of a veterinary behaviorist who was brought in as a consultant, and instructed staff to refrain from communication with

this specialist further. Counter to widely-accepted best practices, management tolerates the use of punishment, including physical reprimands, in training.

- Unsanitary, inhospitable, and dangerous living conditions – rat infestations, standing water due to poor drainage and leaky ceilings, poor enclosure design resulting in difficult-to-cold, feces-coated structures, inadequate HVAC systems resulting in low indoor temperatures in winter months, faulty electric shift doors that chimps can move on their own thereby endangering both chimps and humans, and repeated incidents where individual chimpanzees or the entire sanctuary are without water due to pump system problems or broken fixtures.
- Overcrowding and incompatible social groups due to bringing in chimpanzees too quickly without the proper infrastructure or expertise. Most days, chimpanzees lack the minimal space recommended by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries and the American Zoological Association. As a result, rates of aggression, wounding, and stereotypic behavior are increased.
- Insufficient outdoor access – Each group has access to a 3-acre outdoor habitat once every three days. On a typical day in which a group has outdoor access, they rarely gain access before 11am and often not until 12 or 1pm and are then brought back inside at 3:30pm. If it rains, chimps are often not given access to the outdoor habitat. While each villa does have an open-air porch, the porches lack natural substrate and some receive minimal sunlight, hold water, have leaky roofs, and have limited climbing structures. These deficiencies cause many chimps to avoid their porch entirely.
- Inadequate enrichment – insufficient bedding materials and manipulable objects, limited foraging enrichment opportunities, concrete floors with no substrate, inadequate use of three-dimensional space, etc. Management seems to lack knowledge about how to sustain a professional program of environmental enrichment (such as the SPIDER framework), including use of a rotating enrichment calendar to ensure novelty of enrichment and evaluation of environmental enrichment in terms of whether and to what degree specific enrichment promotes species-typical behavior, decreases stereotypes and self-injurious behavior, etc.
- Failure to track indicators of chimpanzee welfare, such as prevalence and severity of stereotypes, abnormal and self-injurious behavior, overall physical condition, social behavior, and general activity/locomotion/posture, etc. Project Chimps' first chimpanzee groups were enrolled in a user-friendly electronic welfare monitoring program called WelfareTrak, in which caregivers could individually and systematically track chimp welfare within and across groups. This allowed for easy analysis and visualization of data and would automatically alert caregivers if there was a decrease in an individual's welfare. Unfortunately, this program was quickly abandoned, with no reasons provided, after the departures of the first employees who raised welfare/management concerns.
- Failure to adequately address concerns about disease transmission between caregivers and chimpanzees, including failure to disclose to employees and volunteers the fact that numerous chimpanzees are infected with potentially fatal viruses (definitely Hepatitis B Virus and Hepatitis C Virus, possibly HIV) that are considered potentially zoonotic, or transmissible to humans, if appropriate personal protective equipment and safety protocols are not used.
- Potential misappropriation of funds – Management appears much more focused on public perception and building facilities for humans (e.g., classroom, visitors' center, human ropes course, glamping site) than on high-quality care and facility design/expansion.

Our goal of bringing these concerns to your attention is to help Project Chimps succeed in its mission of providing exemplary care to chimpanzees formerly used in research. We truly believe that “It’s their time to live.” We have no doubt that Project Chimp’s leadership is very well-intentioned and cares deeply about the chimpanzees, just as we do. However, it is undeniable to all of us that the welfare concerns we are raising are systemic and have persisted and grown in severity since the sanctuary’s inception; therefore we believe that it is time for a hard look at the heart of the organization, specifically its culture and insularity.

We would prefer to avoid fighting a war in the media that will only delay solving genuine issues and improving the level of care provided to the chimpanzees in Project Chimps’ care. Please grant us an audience with the entire board where we may have a detailed discussion about these concerns and explore possible solutions. In preparation for this meeting, we are including for your careful review the recent welfare report previously supplied to the board. **We ask that you respond to this letter no later than Friday, May 8, 2020.**

In signing this document, I share the concerns presented in this letter, witnessed many of them first hand, and implore Project Chimps to demonstrate its commitment to its current and future chimpanzee residents by taking concrete steps to resolve the outlined welfare and managerial issues. Collectively, the signatories have over 150 years of experience working with and for great apes (mostly chimpanzees). After controlling for time at Project Chimps, the signatories still have amassed over 127 years of experience.

Signatories who are Present and Former PC Employees, Volunteers, Interns, and Donors

<u>Printed Name</u>	<u>PC Title</u>	<u>PC Tenure</u>	<u>Date Signed</u>
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2014-2016	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2015-2016	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2017-2020	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2016	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2016-2019	5/3/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2018-2019	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2019-2020	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2016-2018	5/3/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2017-2019	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2018-2020	5/1/20

<u>Printed Name</u>	<u>PC Title</u>	<u>PC Tenure</u>	<u>Date Signed</u>
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2018-2020	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2018-2020	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2018-2019	5/2/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2016	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2019-present	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2017-present	5/3/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2019	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2019	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2016	5/1/20

Signatories who are chimpanzee experts, have visited Project Chimps, and previously cared for residents

<u>Printed Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Tenure</u>	<u>Date Signed</u>
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	1988-1990	5/3/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	2005-present	5/1/20
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	1996-2016	5/1/20