In Memory of Teresa

Every chimpanzee at Chimp Haven is special, but there is one who stood above the others by virtue of walking out of the woods on a frigid day on January 8, 2007 with a tiny bundle in her arms - her newborn baby, Tracy. On January 7, 2011, one day before Tracy's fourth birthday, Teresa passed away after suffering from a degenerative spine condition. She is missed by all of her friends - chimpanzees and humans alike.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Believe it or not, chimpanzee health and hygiene can be a fascinating subject! Here is an inside look at the challenges of keeping 132 chimpanzees in tip top shape.
Infectious Diseases

Visitors to Chimp Haven often assume that there are strict rules about their keeping a safe distance from the chimpanzees (especially those infected with the HIV virus or hepatitis during their service to biomedical research) to ensure their own human health and safety. That is partially true. Chimp Haven is also concerned for the safety of the chimpanzees. If a chimpanzee contracts a communicable disease like pneumonia, flu, or even a cold, he could have a life-threatening condition and spread it through the colony. Chimp Haven goes through cases of cold suppressants, like Airborne, each winter to minimize infection among the chimpanzees. Chimp Haven care staff are asked not come to work when they are sick, even if they have “just a cold.”

One of the greatest health threats to a chimpanzee colony is tuberculosis. The entire Chimp Haven staff is required to be tested for tuberculosis every six months. The chimpanzees are screened for the disease every year during their annual physical.

Taking Medicine

With at least half of the chimpanzees at Chimp Haven routinely taking medicine or supplements for the chronic problems that plague older chimpanzees, it is a Herculean job to make sure everybody receives what is prescribed for them. Step one is figuring out what food each chimpanzee finds irresistible and using it to encourage him to take his medicine.

Some medicines get mixed with chocolate syrup, yogurt, molasses, Gatorade, or carbonated flavored water. Sometimes, care givers slice open a portion of a banana and insert the medicine before reassembling the banana to give it to the unsuspecting chimpanzee. Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches provide a perfect place to hide pills. The effort to make medicine taking a fun experience has paid off. The chimpanzees are already lined up and waiting for the care givers and veterinary technicians when they arrive each day to distribute medicines.
The Veterinary Staff

You often see them zipping around the Chimp Haven campus in an old ambulance they use as a transport unit and portable clinic. Dr. Raven Jackson and her two veterinary technicians, Jennifer Whitfield and Barbie Boniol, provide healthcare to 132 chimpanzees, more than half of them geriatric. The team can count on a certain amount of routine each day as they treat the chimpanzees who have chronic ailments that span from arthritis, hypertension, heart disease, and liver disease to diabetes. Distributing medicine to those chimpanzees throughout the sanctuary is a full-time job.

And then, there are the new cases that pop up each day. The veterinary team is summoned to treat the garden variety of illnesses and injuries you would find in any hospital ER: a laceration, a necrotic wound from a recluse spider, a swollen testicle, diarrhea, an ingrown toe nail, or a fungal infection, to name a few. Occasionally, severe injuries or illnesses require the help of Chimp Haven’s team of consulting medical physicians whose expertise with humans is also applicable to chimpanzees.

The veterinary team agrees that their greatest satisfaction comes from successfully treating a sick or injured chimpanzee. However, because many of the chimpanzees are older and have been used in biomedical research, the team is also faced with treating those whose lives are coming to an end. Every terminally ill chimpanzee at Chimp Haven receives compassionate, loving end-of-life care from the staff. Once the chimpanzee dies, the staff performs a necropsy - the equivalent of a human autopsy.

Weekly, Dr. Jackson performs annual physical exams on some of the chimpanzees. She records body weight; assesses the major bodily systems; administers immunizations, tuberculin skin testing, and dental prophylaxis; collects blood; does a fecal analysis; and trims nails.

Providing medical treatment to a chimpanzee requires considerable cooperation between a staff member and chimpanzee, especially when you consider that there is always a barrier between the two, unless the chimpanzee is sedated. So, every day, staff members make time to train certain chimpanzees to present different body parts for examination or treatment.

Record keeping, ordering pharmaceuticals and supplies... the list is never ending. The non-stop activity throughout each of the veterinary team’s days may seem daunting to most people, but, without exception, each of these women will tell you they can’t imagine anything else they would rather be doing. They love their patients.

Veterinarian
Raven Jackson, D.V.M.

Veterinary technician
Barbie Boniol processes x-rays

Veterinary technician Jennifer Whitfield assists with physical exam
**Dental Care**

Chimpanzees, living on a diet that includes sugary fruits, instinctively know to chew on antibacterial barks - the same ones that their human neighbors in Africa use - to keep their teeth and gums healthy. Those barks are not available to the chimpanzees at Chimp Haven, and brushing and flossing are out of the question. So, what is a chimpanzee to do?

While fruits are a mainstay of the Chimp Haven diet, food made with processed sugar is only occasionally served as a special treat in the interest of maintaining the chimpanzees' weight and dental health. Each year, they undergo a dental examination as part of their physical. The veterinarian removes tartar and checks for cavities and tooth fractures. Interestingly, fractures are more common than cavities. Teeth that adversely affect the gumline, have root exposure, or cause pain are extracted.

**Fingernails**

Overgrown fingernails and toenails can be a nuisance for Chimp Haven's chimpanzees. If they were living in the wild, the chimpanzees would keep their nails at a reasonable length simply by wearing them down in their day-to-day travel through the forest. At Chimp Haven, the staff trims the chimpanzees’ nails when they get too long. Of course, like humans, there are always some nail biters in the group who take care of the problem themselves.

**Hair & Skin Care**

It is common to see the chimpanzees at Chimp Haven running their fingers through each other’s hair. Many people think they are picking off bugs, but they are actually removing dead skin and dirt. They also clean each other’s cuts or scrapes. However, cleanliness is only part of the reason for grooming. It is a social activity that strengthens bonds of friendship, provides comfort, and even mends broken relationships.

Interestingly, even though they don’t bathe, chimpanzees have very little body odor. One recent exception was Henry who encountered a skunk. Because it is not possible to give a chimpanzee a bath, Henry - and everyone in his social group! - had to live with the skunk odor until it dissipated.
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Chimp Haven relies on donations of all kinds. Among the items currently needed are:

Mashed potato flakes
Nuts in the shell (other than peanuts)
Animal crackers
Craisins
Rice cakes (flavored only)
Sugar free candy
Sugar free chocolate syrup
Sugar free powdered juice
Trail mix in sealed bags
Graham crackers
Goldfish crackers
Granola bars

Chimp Haven’s Wish List

Become a monthly contributor to Chimp Haven. Make your donation go further and help the environment by giving us permission to charge your credit or debit card account once a month.
(The minimum monthly credit or debit card gift is $10.)

ONLINE GIVING: It’s Safe. It’s Secure. It’s Easy.
Visit us at www.chimphaven.org to make a gift online. For more information, call 888.982.4467 or visit us on the web.

Sarah
Chimp Haven is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization, and all donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

**Sweet Dreams**

As chimpanzees get older, they need more sleep. So, Chimp Haven’s elderly population snoozes several times a day. In addition to the 12 hours sleep they get from dusk until dawn, they manage to fit in at least two nap periods throughout the day. Like humans, chimpanzees need to get enough sleep to stay healthy.

Each chimpanzee has a special nap position. Some lay on their backs and cross their legs, others put their feet in the air, and yet others might rest their chin on folded arms like this sleeping chimpanzee, 46-year-old Rita.

Scientific studies point to the fact that chimpanzees can dream. At Chimp Haven, we like to think that, with all the love and attention that they receive, the chimpanzees’ dreams have come true.