

# Veterinary Care of Chimpanzees



## What is veterinary medicine?

- Veterinary medicine is a type of science that deals with the health of animals.
- Just like humans, animals sometimes need doctors to help them stay healthy, or to heal from an illness or wound.
- Veterinarians are doctors who take care of animals.
- Veterinarians go to school for eight years to earn their degrees in veterinary medicine. They learn to prevent, treat, and diagnose animals and their medical conditions.
- Veterinarians can choose to focus on different areas of study. While some choose to take care of pets, like cats and dogs, others may focus on livestock, zoo animals, or wildlife, just to name a few!
- Veterinary Technicians are trained to help veterinarians care for animals by doing things like performing tests or giving medications.

## What is veterinary medicine like for chimpanzees?

- Chimpanzees are humans' closest living relative. Chimps share more than 98% of their genes with humans, and like us, they also deal with aging and medical conditions.
- Chimpanzees have large brains and cranial areas just like humans, which gives chimps the ability to develop social relationships with each other like we do. It also means they are able to determine unique likes and dislikes, just like us!
- While we're not that different from chimpanzees, there are some key differences in our bodies. For example, chimpanzees have longer fingers and shorter thumbs than humans do. They need them to be able to brachiate (or swing) through trees!
- In the wild chimpanzees may not have access to veterinary care, but at a



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sanctuary like Chimp Haven, veterinarians help the chimps stay healthy or take care of them when they get sick.

- Veterinarians at Chimp Haven do annual exams of the colony to maintain their health. Some of the things veterinarians check during the chimps' annual physical exams are:
  - Dental care: Just like humans, chimpanzees have 32 teeth, with much larger canine teeth. The chimps receive a full dental cleaning and check-up every year, similar to the check-up that you might receive from your dentist!
  - Healthy body weight: Male chimpanzees can weigh up to 150 pounds, with females being only slightly smaller. The largest male chimpanzee at the sanctuary is Ricky. He weighs 235 pounds! Our veterinary team checks every chimps' weight during their annual check-up to make sure they are maintaining a healthy body weight. If not, our team may work with them on an exercise regimen!
  - Chronic illness: Just like humans, heart disease is the most common cause of death among chimpanzees. Many of the chimps at Chimp Haven have chronic illnesses, and our veterinary team closely monitors them and ensures they are receiving the care they need.
- Veterinarians are skilled to provide proper care to all types of species. All species are unique, and chimpanzees are no exception! Check back for next week's lesson to learn more about how we care for the chimpanzees at Chimp Haven!



## What is Chimp Haven?

- Chimp Haven is a big sanctuary where chimpanzees live together in family groups, also known as troops.
- Chimp Haven is located in Louisiana.
- More than 300 chimpanzees live at Chimp Haven today!



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