

Veterinary Care at Chimp Haven



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 at Chimp Haven?

- Chimp Haven has an all-female veterinary team of eight people.
- The sanctuary veterinarians act not only as doctors, but also as surgeons, dentists, nurses, and radiologists! Each team member adapts to a role depending on the chimpanzees' needs.
- Good nutrition, housing, vaccinations, procedures, and routine doctor's visits are all essential to good veterinary care. The team works hard to meet the chimpanzees' needs!
- Chimp Haven's veterinarians typically perform 12 doctor's visits per week, and veterinary technicians perform daily observations of each chimpanzee.
- Each chimpanzee receives one physical exam per year. Exams are performed very quickly, taking an average of just 10-13 minutes. The team averages 250 or more exams each year!
- Within their social troops, chimpanzees work disagreements out with their



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bodies, and sometimes they fight. They also work things out and forgive easily! The most common condition the veterinary team sees each week is wounding.



- The chimps play an important role in their own healthcare. More than half of the chimps will take shots willingly, and many will present their wounds, holding still for a stethoscope, and allowing for temperature readings. Chimp Haven was even able to care for a diabetic chimpanzee that required daily insulin!
- When you went to the doctor for your last checkup, did they ask you lots of questions? Maybe they asked you what hurts or even what you ate for breakfast.
 - Chimpanzees can't use words to directly communicate, so the team has to be very observant.
 - Forming relationships with the residents is key to their veterinary care.
 - The chimpanzees love to be tickled with long handled spoons, and to have play sessions with the team. They even laugh! The team builds bonds with the chimpanzees, and their close relationships help them notice when they are not feeling well.
 - If a chimpanzee would normally come out to play during morning rounds to take their medicine, and they don't show up one day, it may be a clue that something is off. The veterinary team notices small changes that may indicate differences in the chimpanzees and their health.
- Giving the chimps their medicine:
 - Each chimpanzee is an individual with different needs and preferences. This applies to their food choices, and even the medicines they take!
 - Chimp Haven residents are on a variety of medications. It takes the veterinary team about five hours each day to give all the chimps in the colony their medication.
 - Chimpanzees have an air sac in their lower throat that helps them create super loud vocalizations. Chimpanzees may also learn to



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recognize human vocalizations, which is helpful at Chimp Haven when the veterinary team is calling names for medications.



- Chimpanzees are very observant with a keen sense of smell, which makes it challenging for the veterinary team when preparing daily medications. Some chimpanzees, like Juan, will take anything while others, like Nina, don't always like taking their medicine.
- Have you ever helped give a dog medication? If so, you may have hidden the medication in a food that the dog loves, like cheese or peanut butter. At Chimp Haven, the veterinary team hides medications in juice, peanut butter, a banana or applesauce! The chimps are very smart: If medications are hidden in food the chimpanzees will normally smell it before accepting it.
- The team has a fun and unique challenge in finding flavorings and creative solutions that are just right for the chimpanzees! Grape and fruit punch are favorite flavors of the colony.
- Chimpanzees also need vitamins for their health just like you and me. Colony favorites include vitamin C tablets!

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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