

Towards individualised 24/7 care and wellbeing plans for non-human primates living in human care

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Providing individualised 24/7 care is critical for the wellbeing of non-human primates living in zoos, research facilities, sanctuaries, and other contexts where primates live in human care. Traditional back-of-house (BOH) habitat design and, indeed, care routines often fail to meet primates' complex needs for meaningful activities, choice, and control at all hours of the day, including those times at night when no caregivers are on site. Redesigning the physical and psychological aspects of primate habitats and care plans to allow greater agency, reduced dependence on human caregivers, and promote 24/7 expression of natural behaviours can help to mitigate boredom, inactivity, and other negative welfare states in primates.

A key component of individualised care plans is understanding the affective states of animals in human care, defined as the individual animals' perception of its welfare in the moment. Positive experiences of relaxation, contentedness, and excitement should be encouraged throughout all elements of the housing and care arrangements for animals, while negative experiences of anger, fear, and depression should be prevented as much as possible. Developing plans that promote positive affective states in animals further requires an understanding of the individual in question; even within the same species, individual differences in behaviour and temperament can influence how animals perceive and react to their environment.

The key to the welfare of all animals in human care, including all non-human primates, is adapting and embedding an ethos of individualised, round-the-clock wellbeing into all policies and procedures surrounding habitat design, enrichment plans, positive reinforcement training, and all other aspects of animal care.