

CHIMPANZEE TRUST

CHIMPANZEE SANCTUARY AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION TRUST

COVID-19 OPERATING PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

With the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic, we are navigating uncharted waters. The world is yet again tested with a dangerous pathogen that has threatened our way of life. It has changed how we relate with one another and has reminded us of the simple basic needs of humanity.

Humans are part and parcel of nature and not above it. We remain vulnerable to the unknown. This new coronavirus (officially known as SARS-CoV-2) and the disease it causes (COVID-19) affect humans, but can potentially also affect many other beings, such as chimpanzees and other apes, and the risk to already highly endangered and vulnerable populations of apes is enormous.

Two-thirds of human infectious diseases – including Ebola, SARS, MERS, and now COVID-19 – have been found to originate from wildlife, and the vast majority of human diseases also affect nonhuman animals. Since so much is unknown currently about the pathogenicity of the SARS-CoV-2 virus to great apes, the prevention of any potential pathogen spread between humans and great apes is critical. Furthermore, there is abundant scientific evidence that great apes are susceptible to infection with human respiratory pathogens. *At this point, it is safest to assume that great apes, including the chimpanzee in our care, are susceptible to SARS CoV-2 infection.*

The management of the Chimpanzee Trust, following a comprehensive risk assessment, has developed the following protocols and Standard Operating Procedures to reduce the risk of infection to the staff and the chimpanzees under its care.

1.0 OPERATIONAL PREPAREDNESS

1.1 COVID-19 Management task team

The Chimpanzee Trust has set up a 5 member COVID-19 management team that shall advise the management on the following;

- Develop measures, controls and guidelines to manage the risk of SARs CoV 2 virus to the chimpanzees in its care, the visitors and staff of the Chimpanzee Trust and the Ngamba Island Chimpanzee Sanctuary.
- Develop and continuously review protocols and procedures and checklists for prevention of infection and case management.
- Regularly review the risk potential and conduct a periodic risk assessment and analysis to form scientific opinions to guide management decisions
- Ensure compliance with COVID-19 prevention measures as indicated in this and subsequent documents and communications to the staff of the Chimpanzee Trust and the general public.

The team shall be appointed by the Executive Director and shall include;

1. The Sanctuary Manager
2. The Marketing Officer
3. A senior member of the animal care team
4. A senior member of the hospitality team (food preparation and housekeeping)
5. A senior security personnel

1.2 Staff preparedness

The staff of the Chimpanzee Trust and in particular, those of Ngamba Island Chimpanzee Sanctuary, shall undergo training and be equipped with the necessary tools and equipment as shall be guided by the COVID-19 management team to manage the risk of infection at all the sites of operation of the Trust.

In doing this, the current procedures have been developed;

- i. Only essential numbers of staff and volunteers shall be maintained on-site at all the operational sites of the Chimpanzee Trust. This is to allow for social distancing and the prevention of overcrowding. Those that can work from home without compromising the nature and quality of their work, shall be encouraged to do so.
- ii. Staff shall work in shifts as shall be determined by the HR department to allow for a fair balance of duties in all departments. At the sanctuary, the staff shifts shall be adjusted to allow for double shifts with an overlap to allow for efficiency and continuity and safety as well as monitoring new shifts for signs of illness prior to contact with guests and the chimpanzees.
- iii. Any staff showing signs of illness shall be removed from the site for immediate medical attention.

- iv. All staff shall be equipped with Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) to include; re-usable facemasks, gloves, face shields, personal hand sanitizers and where indicated personal coveralls. Specific wear shall be maintained for the sanctuary staff to be used strictly when on the island. Staff are discouraged to carry luggage from home to the island, and off the island back home. Personal attire for use on the island shall be maintained on the island.
- v. Staff are discouraged from direct contact with each other and visitors and guests at all times. The use of technology to facilitate communications as well as bonding shall be employed.
- vi. All direct physical contact with the chimpanzees, except under full PPE, is prohibited.

Regular training on new and enhanced protocols shall be conducted by to the team by the COVID-19 management team. Special focus shall be given to service staff.

Once a month, there shall drill to test the compliance and preparedness of all members of the team.

2.0 COVID-19 Operating Procedures

2.1 Deliveries and Transportation

In conducting its business, the Chimpanzee Trust deals with a number of service providers, including those for delivery of essential goods and services and especially the transportation of staff and supplies to and from the Island (Ngamba Island). As such, there has been a need to review the protocols for delivery to minimize the risk of infection through the delivery and transportation of goods and services at sites of need.

- i. All sites of operation of the Chimpanzee Trust, except for the sanctuary, shall be open for business following the ease of the lockdown imposed by the Government to combat the risk of spread of the SARs CoV2 virus. The sanctuary shall remain closed to all visitors and non-essential personnel. This position shall be reviewed periodically by the COVID-19 management team.
- ii. All arrivals at all sites shall be screened for temperature, daily. At the sanctuary, daily temperature screening of all shall be conducted by the in-charge.

- iii. Boats and/or vessels used for transportation of staff and supplies shall be disinfected with 2% chlorhexidine in 70% alcohol before and after every trip.
- iv. All supplies to all sites shall be disinfected in a mild bleach solution (for food items and organic supplies) and a phenolic disinfectant (for non-food and inorganic items).

2.2 Visitors and Tourist management

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the tourism industry and as this is a major source of income for the sanctuary operations. The initial measures to stop the spread of the virus necessitated the closure of the borders, the restriction of movements as well as strict measures for access to primate sites. The chimpanzee as a species is especially vulnerable to coronaviruses as has been evidenced in previous outbreaks in Africa and other parts of the world. As such, there is a need to be extra cautious in preparation for the resumption of services that ensure an income for the sanctuary, while not compromising the safety of the primates in our care, who are of primary concern.

With the ease of the lockdown and the anticipated opening of tourism services, the following measure must be put in place before consideration can be made to allow visitors at our sites, especially at the Ngamba Island tourism site. The COVID-19 management team has developed the following protocols for the management of visitors and tourists at its sites

- i. The sanctuary shall remain closed to all visitors and non-essential staff. This position shall be reviewed periodically by management.
- ii. All guests shall sanitize their hands with hand sanitizer and have their shoes and bags/equipment disinfected with a phenolic disinfectant provided before access to all premises of the Chimpanzee Trust
- iii. A food bath foot disinfection shall be availed at designated points at all entry points at the sites of operation
- iv. All visitors and guests must wear a face mask. Reusable facemasks shall be available for sale for those that do not have face masks.
- v. All arrivals shall be screened for temperature.
- vi. Handwashing and hand sanitization shall be emphasized. Designated areas for hand wash and sanitization shall be clearly marked and guests advised to use the implements.
- vii. Vessels and other vehicles used for transportation of guests shall be disinfected with a phenolic disinfectant before and after every trip. All luggage, including hand and equipment luggage, shall be disinfected on arrival at all sites.

- viii. All vehicles and vessels shall operate at 50% capacity. This is to allow social distancing during travel.
- ix. Upon arrival at Ngamba Island, all guests shall sanitize their hands with hand sanitizer provided or wash their hands with soap and water provided. A foot bath shall also be available to disinfect shoes. Bags and equipment shall also be disinfected with 2% chlorhexidine by spray.
- x. Staff interacting with the guests and visitors shall be smartly dressed and wear a face mask and a face shield.
- xi. Social distancing is to be maintained at all times. This shall be a minimum of two (2) meters from the next person and ten (10) meters from a chimpanzee.
- xii. Frequently touch surfaces shall be disinfected with a phenol disinfectant every four (4) hours. On Ngamba Island, this shall be done before and after every group visit.
- xiii. An isolation room shall be prepared and maintained for case management of guests that may present with signs of illness. An evacuation plan shall be set up to immediately evacuate cases from the sites to the nearest health facility, following the communication protocols in clause 3.

3.0 Communications

3.1 Internal communication

Communication between the staff and management shall be maintained as per the established communication protocols and procedures. Incidences are to be immediately reported to the site in-charge, who shall, in turn, inform the office of the Executive Director.

Staff shall be trained on the communication of COVID-19 measures to guests and visitors at all sites. Additional communication shall be made in the form of;

- Posters with key messages, at select locations specified by the COVID-19 team
- Online communications by the marketing team
- Weekly briefings on the status of COVID-19 measures

3.2 External communications

The Executive Director's Office shall liaise with the Municipal authorities for the necessary actions to be taken depending on the communications.

Any and all communications to the media and partners shall be coordinated by the Office of the Executive Director.

4.0 CASE MANAGEMENT

The most common signs of COVID-19 disease include; Fever, Dry cough and tiredness

Less common signs include; Aches and pains, sore throat, diarrhoea, headache, loss of taste and smell, skin rashes,

Serious symptoms include difficulty in breathing, chest pains and loss of speech and movement.

Any persons that show any of the signs should be immediately separated from the other people immediately and in a safe, manner, be conveyed to the nearest health facility for a COVID-19 test. Other less common signs may be less difficult to identify, but should be identified as well.

All staff shall be trained in the identification of signs of potential illness or risk of COVID-19.

4.1 Visitors and guests

The nearest health facility to the sanctuary and Head Office sites is the Entebbe Grade 5 Hospital. All suspected cases shall be safely moved to this facility. The management of the Trust has set up a communication structure with the hospital administration to receive all suspected cases of COVID-19.

- An isolation room shall be set up and available at all times for the safe isolation of guests and visitors that are suspected of illness or showing signs of infection.
- A secondary temperature screening shall be performed by trained staff in full PPE for isolated cases every 15min until the individual is moved from the site to the health facility. For guests at the head office, suspected to be infected, the health team at the Hospital shall arrange for the pickup of such cases. For suspected cases on Ngamba Island, a separate boat shall be arranged to safely transport the individuals to Entebbe and subsequently for testing and isolation.

4.2 Staff, volunteers and service providers

Screening for symptoms and daily temperature screening shall be applied to all staff. Any staff showing signs of illness shall be immediately be isolated and transferred to the Entebbe Grade B Hospital.

4.3 Resident chimpanzees

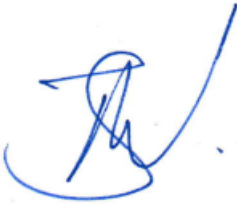
Chimpanzees are highly susceptible to infection by coronaviruses. Whereas there is currently no clear evidence to infection of chimpanzees with the new corona virus, SARs CoV 2 virus, the evidence suggests that the effects could be more severe in Chimpanzees. As such extra precautions must be taken to protect the chimpanzees from any risk of infection.

In the case where a chimpanzee is suspected to have contracted the virus, through symptoms and temperature checks, the following procedures shall apply;

1. The suspected chimpanzee shall be separated from the others and isolated in the chimpanzee isolation ward on Ngamba Island.
2. The sanctuary shall immediately be closed to all except for essential staff and a select veterinary team.
3. The sanctuary veterinarian, fully equipped in PPE shall safely extract the necessary samples and submit them to the Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI) for testing for the SARs CoV2 virus.
4. In case of a positive test, the chimpanzee shall be treated from the isolation ward by a specific and select veterinary team on the advice of the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), the Ministry of Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities (MTWA) and Makerere University (MAK).
5. In case of a negative test, the chimpanzee under investigation shall remain isolated from the rest until there are no symptoms.

These SOPs shall remain in place until such a time that Management shall deem it no longer necessary. Management shall, periodically, review these measures.

Management remains committed to ensuring that essential operations of the sanctuary are maintained and the chimpanzees are kept well and safe, as well as our staff. We urge everybody to take extra care to stay safe and healthy, for yourself, your loved ones, and everyone around you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a large, sweeping flourish that extends upwards and to the right.

Dr Joshua Rukundo

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR