**COVID-19 AAZK Operations Updates**

**5/4/2020**

<https://www.dispatch.com/news/20200504/whatrsquos-it-like-to-be-columbus-zoo-animal-keeper-during-coronavirus-pandemic>

**5/2/2020**

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/life-covid-19-animals-zookeepers-maryland-zoo/story?id=70422788>

**4/30/2020**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/pets.html>

**4/25/2020**

AAZK members across the nation are experiencing the effects of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Keepers, aquarists, educators, volunteers, students, vet techs, and others within our field have been impacted in their own way.

As animal care professionals we all recognize the importance of documenting and sharing our experiences. This practice contributes to effective communication and professional growth within our field.

Though now is the time to focus on the safety and well-being of yourselves, the animals, and your loved ones, AAZK plans to document these experiences to benefit members for years to come.

In the future, AAZK will be producing an issue of Animal Keepers’ Forum with a focus on your efforts during these difficult times, and we will be encouraging our members to share their insights.

**4/23/2020**

**Notice from USDA APHIS**

**Confirmation of COVID-19 in Two Pet Cats in New York**

Washington, D.C. April 22, 2020 – The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) today announced the first confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) infection in two pet cats. These are the first pets in the United States to test positive for SARS-CoV-2.

The cats live in two separate areas of New York state. Both had mild respiratory illness and are expected to make a full recovery. SARS-CoV-2 infections have been reported in very few animals worldwide, mostly in those that had close contact with a person with COVID-19.

At this time, routine testing of animals is not recommended. Should other animals be confirmed positive for SARS-CoV-2 in the United States, USDA will post the findings at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/SA\_One\_Health/sars-cov-2-animals-us. State animal health and public health officials will take the lead in making determinations about whether animals should be tested for SARS-CoV-2.

In the New York cases announced today, a veterinarian tested the first cat after it showed mild respiratory signs. No individuals in the household were confirmed to be ill with COVID-19. The virus may have been transmitted to this cat by mildly ill or asymptomatic household members or through contact with an infected person outside its home.

Samples from the second cat were taken after it showed signs of respiratory illness. The owner of the cat tested positive for COVID-19 prior to the cat showing signs. Another cat in the household has shown no signs of illness.

Both cats tested presumptive positive for SARS-CoV-2 at a private veterinary laboratory, which then reported the results to state and federal officials. The confirmatory testing was conducted at NVSL and included collection of additional samples. NVSL serves as an international reference laboratory and provides expertise and guidance on diagnostic techniques, as well as confirmatory testing for foreign and emerging animal diseases. Such testing is required for certain animal diseases in the U.S. in order to comply with national and international reporting procedures. The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) considers SARS-CoV-2 an emerging disease, and therefore USDA must report confirmed U.S. animal infections to the OIE.

Until we know more, CDC recommends the following:

Avoid contact with your pet, including petting, snuggling, being kissed or licked, and sharing food or bedding.

If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wear a cloth face covering and wash your hands before and after you interact with them.

For more information on animals and COVID-19, see: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html>

**4/22/2020**

The following update was issued by WCS’s Bronx Zoo today:

On April 5, 2020, we reported that a four-year-old female Malayan tiger had tested positive for COVID-19 and three other tigers and three African lions were showing similar symptoms.

Samples for testing from the tiger, Nadia, were collected from her nose, throat, and respiratory tract while she was under anesthesia. Subsequently, we can confirm that the three other tigers in Tiger Mountain and the three African lions that exhibited a cough have also tested positive for COVID-19. This testing was done by using a fecal sample test developed by our laboratory partners that does not require the animals be placed under anesthesia. The fecal tests confirmed our suspicion that all seven cats had the infection, and also determined that one tiger at Tiger Mountain that never developed a cough was also positive for the disease.

We are grateful for the cooperation and support of the New York State Diagnostic Laboratory at Cornell University and the University of Illinois, College of Veterinary Medicine Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, where the initial COVID-19 testing of samples was performed and the USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratory where confirmatory testing was conducted.

All eight cats continue to do well. They are behaving normally, eating well, and their coughing is greatly reduced.

We tested the tigers and lions out of an abundance of caution and will ensure any knowledge we gain about COVID-19 will contribute to the world’s continuing understanding of this novel coronavirus. The testing of these cats was done in veterinary laboratories and resources used did not take from those being used for human testing.

None of the zoo’s snow leopards, cheetahs, clouded leopard, Amur leopard, puma or serval are showing any signs of illness. Our cats were infected by a staff person who was asymptomatically infected with the virus or before that person developed symptoms. Preventive measures are now in place for all staff who are caring for them, and the other cats in our four WCS zoos, to prevent further exposure of any of our felids in our zoos to the disease.

COVID-19 is a disease caused by the coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2. It is believed that the virus was first transferred to people at a food market that trades in wildlife in Wuhan, China. There is no evidence that animals play a role in the transmission of COVID-19 to people other than the initial event in the Wuhan market, and no evidence that any person has been infected with COVID-19 in the US by animals, including by pet dogs or cats.

We will issue additional information as warranted. Our four zoos and aquarium have been temporarily closed since March 16.

**4/21/2020 Update**

* Bowling for Rhinos is the signature conservation program of AAZK & is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year! However, the COVID-19 pandemic may force chapters to postpone, alter, or even cancel their annual events. In order to continue the united efforts of our chapters and aid the BFR Conservation Partners at a critical time, AAZK will be participating in the 2020 #GivingZOOday as we seek to raise $5000 to save all 5 rhino species on Tuesday, May 5th. Help us #KeeptheFiveAlive on 5/5!

**4/18/20 Updates**

* BFR Registration Deadline Extended to June 1, 2020
* AAZK National Conference Paper/Poster Abstract Submission Deadline extended to June 1, 2020
* #supportkeepercrafts for use by creators to draw AAZK followers interested in supporting keeper creations during this time
* AAZK Grant Cancellations: 2020 Research Grant and 2020 Conservation, Preservation, and Restorations grants cancelled
* Bowling for Rhinos Guidance and Updates:
  + Registration is still open with pushed back deadline
  + Recommended that chapters plan events for later in the year, but government and community regulations could still have an effect
  + Looking into altering registration form to enable a “target date” or TBD date option in place of a specific date due to difficulties of setting dates with host venues
  + If a registered event is cancelled for 2020, plan is to allow registration fee to be credited to 2021 event
  + Online Donations:
    - Online donation page where donors can choose to support a specific chapter and confirm donation with Ed Hansen <https://aazk.org/bowling-for-rhinos/bfr-donation/>
    - Upcoming eblast put together by BFR that can be used to encourage donations from friends, family, and regular event donors
    - Chapters can donate via the link if they are unable to host an event
  + BFR Merchandise sales support the program as well including 30th Anniversary t-shirt <https://aazk.org/product-category/bfr-merchandise/>
  + BFR trips are coordinated in concert between Conservation Partners and AAZK so how the trips proceed will require work between all parties involved

**4/17/2020 Update**

* 2020 AAZK National Conference Updates:
  + Currently planned to proceed as scheduled, but government and community regulations will determine final decision
  + Registration open for all Conference registrations, Pre/Post Trips, Limited Topical Workshops, and Professional Certificate Courses
  + Hotel reservations remain open as well
  + Registrations and reservations able to be cancelled and refunded fully
  + Chapter Challenge ongoing if chapters wish to support Conference
  + <https://www.aazk2020.org/> to register, link to hotel, support Chapter Challenge, or learn more

**4/5/2020**

* 2020 AAZK Office Closure. Due to the unfolding events of the Covid-19 Virus and the shutdown of all non-essential businesses within the state of Arizona, the offices of AAZK will be closed until further notice. Please contact me at [Ed.Hansen@aazk.org](Ed.Hansen@aazk.org%20) for assistance