



Ape Care Demonstration

How to Use This Document

The following text is similar to what a presenter will say during a public demonstration. You may follow along, but please note that the exact wording and sequence will vary depending on staff and animal activity. The type of care session being facilitated will also vary. This document describes both a training session and an enrichment session. Feel free to ask the presenter questions about the program's focus. Thank you for joining us today!

Pre-Demonstration Announcement

Hello! In a few minutes, Animal Care staff will be working with the apes. If you're interested in learning more, please find a place a few feet away from the windows. You may take a seat in the front or stand behind the people who are already seated. The demonstration will start shortly and will last five to ten minutes. If you have any questions before we begin, please let me know.

Introduction

Welcome to Regenstein Center for African Apes at Lincoln Park Zoo! My name is _____, and I'm with the Learning Team.



If you'd like to learn more about how this session demonstrates our commitment to the well-being of apes, make your way to the habitat and find a place to sit or stand along the windows. Participation in today's activity is completely voluntary for the apes. It's designed to be a

positive experience, so we'll likely see some of the apes take part.

Ape Care: Enrichment Session Option

Enrichment provides mental and physical stimulation for the animals and encourages natural behaviors. Enrichment can be built into the habitat, like the tall climbing structures. Enrichment can also be added at special times to provide variety, like large items the apes can move or food puzzles. During today's session, you will see enrichment that is added in unique ways to encourage natural behaviors like foraging or tool use.

Foraging, which means searching for food, is one very common natural behavior of apes. Apes spend a large portion of their day foraging for food in the wild. Animal Care staff encourage foraging in many ways at the zoo. During an animal care session, like today's, you might see food tossed into their outdoor habitats. Animal care staff will stand on the roof and toss parts of the ape's vet

approved daily diet. Food items like lettuce, kale, broccoli, carrots, peppers and more are often used in these food tosses. A food toss encourages a series of important natural behaviors like smelling, moving, searching, climbing, and reaching. Food tosses might also include other enrichment items that encourage the apes to open or peel it, a very common behavior with apes.

Enrichment is provided regularly, but in a variety of ways, and it is always voluntary. The apes might spend a long time with the enrichment or no time at all, it is completely their choice.

Tool Use and Chimpanzees

Tool use is another natural behavior for great apes especially chimpanzees. In



the wild, chimpanzees use long, thin branches to reach into termite mounds and “fish” out termites.

At the zoo, keepers “bait” plastic tubes with food and place them along the mesh panels. Branches, provided by keepers or found outside by the chimpanzees, are the preferred tools. Termite fishing gives the chimpanzees the opportunity to problem solve by choosing or creating the proper tool. It also encourages them to move all around their habitat to collect tools and find the food.



Keepers suspect that chimpanzees can smell the food or hear the keepers installing the tubes to know when food is ready. In the wild, the method chimpanzees use to identify the best spot for termites remains a mystery. The food rewards offered during termite fishing are low fat, healthy options, highly



preferred by great apes, such as applesauce, ketchup, mustard, oatmeal or honey.

During a care session at the zoo you may see several chimpanzees gather around the termite tubes at the same time. Chimpanzees live in social groups called “troops,” and they have a high tolerance for being close to each other. While one chimpanzee completes a task, other chimpanzees in the troop might learn by watching and imitating. Researchers call this “social learning,” and they believe it helps chimpanzees quickly learn how to complete new tasks, like termite fishing.

Learning Through Observing

Lincoln Park Zoo is home to one of the largest zoo-based conservation and science programs in North America, which includes the Lester E. Fisher Center for the Study and Conservation of Apes, based right here in Regenstein Center for African Apes. Zoo staff and volunteers observe ape behavior and record what they see. Observing how

apes interact with enrichment, like they are today, can help us understand how apes think, interact with each other, and how we can continue to promote their well-being.

Ape Care: Training Session

Training sessions encourage the apes to participate in their own care. They can be asked by keepers to do a variety of behaviors, which makes taking care of the apes, and keeping them healthy, much easier. We focus on positive reinforcement-based training, which means the apes are rewarded for choosing to participate.

Rewards usually come in the form of food, in this case with some of the gorilla's preferred foods, things like grapes, leafy greens, fibrous veggies, blueberries, or tomatoes. Each great ape at the zoo has an allotment of vet approved fruits and veggies that they are to receive each day. Lincoln Park Zoo employs a nutritionist whose job is

to monitor and adjust each individual's diet to meet all of their nutritional needs.

Keepers use these training sessions to make sure every individual in the group, regardless of rank, is getting preferred foods in healthy amounts. You might observe the keepers with containers of juice, another part of the vet approved diet and a good source of vitamins. Juice can be an excellent way to administer extra vitamin supplements or even medications to an individual who might not feel well.

Training is completely voluntary; if an individual refuses to do something or makes a mistake, there are no negative consequences. The keeper might ask for the behavior a few more times but will eventually move on. When a particular behavior is done correctly, the keepers give them a verbal cue (such as a whistle or a word) to let them know it was done right and that they are about to receive their food reward. Keepers want to keep these

trainings a positive and enriching experience for the great apes to aid in the continuation of their participation in their own care.

Apes learn behaviors through a careful process called shaping. A keeper will begin shaping a new behavior by rewarding movements that are close to what they're looking for, for example, perhaps an individual brings an arm up to scratch their nose and we want them to learn to show their arm to the keeper. As the arm brushes the mesh the keeper says "arm" and then immediately rewards the individual with a highly preferred food item. The animal will hopefully want to try the behavior again to get more food. Keepers will continue rewarding behaviors that are close to what the keeper is looking for and slowly move the ape towards the desired behavior. Behaviors take time to learn, sometimes a few weeks and sometimes longer. Our dedicated care staff are patient and committed to the ape's care.

Training Is Beneficial

Training is an essential part of caring for the great apes. This type of cooperative care has many benefits that enhance the lives of apes here at Lincoln Park Zoo.

Learning new behaviors and practicing old behaviors through training provides mental stimulation for the apes. These sessions also add variety to their daily lives and can encourage physical movement as well. Training also helps build strong relationships between apes and their keepers. Staff get to know the apes' unique personalities and their typical day-to-day behaviors. This helps animal care staff pick up on subtle changes with the apes that might require further observation. All behaviors requested during a training session focus on care. Animal care staff want to check on each ape from head to toe allowing them to assess their overall health. Behaviors like asking the apes to open their mouth, also allows keepers to provide daily care that might be needed like teeth brushing. It also prepares the apes for when they might be asked for that

behavior during a veterinary visit. Practicing behaviors during training that might be asked during an exam makes vet care more comfortable and familiar for the apes at the zoo.

Behaviors You Might Observe

Through positive reinforcement, the apes have learned a variety of behaviors that contribute to an animal's daily care and well-being.

Station marker: You might have seen a shape, like a red heart or a green diamond. These are *station markers*, which are unique to each ape – like a name tag! The keepers use these markers to indicate to the ape that the training is beginning and can also be used to indicate where that individual is training.

Opening mouth, stick out tongue: Keepers may want to check the teeth, gums or tongue of the ape for any irregularities or to see if previous conditions are healing.

Raising hand or foot: Keepers will check for abrasions, sores or cracks on the skin, and may apply ointment or balm if needed. They can also ensure that the ape's mobility is normal.

Turning around/turning shoulder: Keepers can assess the ape's mobility and can also check the body for abrasions.

Keeper touching ape with one finger: Usually paired with one of the above movements, a single finger touch helps the ape acclimate to being touched or feeling pressure on the body, which will help them be calm later when receiving vet care.

Stand up/Sit down: This is another mobility check. It is also a way to ensure that apes stay active. Dominant or older apes may not move around as much as younger ones, so keepers may integrate extra movement into their training session.

Another thing you might see our keepers using are **face masks and gloves**. This is a safety precaution used to keep everyone healthy. Gorillas and chimpanzees are primates just like you and I and can catch many of the same illnesses that would keep us home from work or school.

Conclusion

As we finish up with today's program, I hope you have enjoyed how these care sessions demonstrate our commitment to the well-being of apes. You can help apes, too. One of the primary threats to wild apes is habitat loss due to



extensive logging in African rainforests. When you buy wood or paper products, look for the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) logo to be sure that they come from sustainably harvested lumber.

Once again, my name is _____, and I'm with the Learning team. Please find me if you have any questions.

Thanks for being here! Your support helps us conserve wildlife.