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Gombe Health Guidelines Proposed.

Researchers as well as tourists and park staff might unwillingly transmit infectious diseases to wild chimpanzees. Everybody who approaches habituated chimpanzees closely should take every care not to hurt chimpanzees. Gombe researchers are proposing the following guidelines as the materials for further discussion. We welcome your comments (ed.):

**<FORUM>
Health Guidelines for Visiting
Researchers in Gombe National
Park to Minimize Risk of
Disease Transmission among
Primates (Updated 8/01/03)**

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A) Before coming to Gombe, researchers are requested to:

1. Obtain current immunization against:
 - yellow fever* (10 years protection)
 - polio* (lifetime protection)
 - tetanus* (booster every 5 years questionable time)
 - hepatitis A* (lifetime protection -questionable time)
 - measles* (lifetime protection)
 - meningitis* (3 years protection)
2. Ensure clear TB status (negative skin test) or vaccine for TB (10 years protection).
3. Researchers from temperate-zone countries are please to obtain (same year) immunization against influenza in winter (October through March in the Northern hemisphere, April through September in the Southern hemisphere).
4. Ensure clear internal parasite status.

B) Upon arrival at Gombe, researchers are requested to:

1. Provide proof of vaccinations.
2. Remain quarantined for 5-7 days before entering the forest and following chimpanzees and baboons.
3. Pass physical exam with GSRC staff nurse. People with illnesses are forbidden to enter the forest or follow chimps and baboons on the beach.
4. Attend a sensitization session upon arrival and sign the health and safety regulation guidelines.
5. Adhere to regular health checks during research visit.

C) Before entering forest, visiting researchers are advised to:

1. Use the latrine before entering the forest.
2. Wash hands before entering the forest and upon return.
3. Disinfect soles of field shoes in antiseptic bath of 2% chlorine solution.

D) During chimp follows, visiting researchers are advised to:

1. Ensure you are not sick: do not enter the forest and follow chimpanzees and baboons if sick.
2. Maintain the mandatory minimum

following and observation distance of 7.5 meters (25 feet).

If quarantine measures were not followed, maintain a distance of at least 10m (33 ft) and a maximum observation limit of one hour per habituated chimpanzee or group per day.

3. Be aware that the number of observers with any habituated chimp or chimp group should not exceed six people. If there is a conflict of interest when chimp parties join-up, let non-essential assistants be prepared to withdraw till the chimps separate again. Also, when a party of tourists arrive, be prepared to give them priority for their one hour.
4. Control sneezing and coughing while following and observing chimpanzees. No spitting or nose-blowing on the ground.
5. If you need a latrine and one is not nearby, dig a foot deep hole for burying feces
6. Never smoke or eat in the forest. While preparing and eating food at home, do not leave remnants outside for wild animals to consume, and never feed them. Baboons can become aggressive when trying to steal food .. it is better if they do not see it.
7. Carry equipment, backpacks and other items at all times, don't put them down. Both chimpanzees and baboons will steal anything left unattended. Such items, as well as tissues and bandannas, are possible carriers of infectious pathogens.
8. Never litter. Throwing food, candy wrappers, cigarette butts or any other waste onto the ground is forbidden. Waste items may be infectious.
9. Do not attempt flash photography or use of reflective devices. Never try to attract an animal's attention in order to take a better photograph or video.
10. Speak quietly. Do not use arm gestures while talking or move suddenly. Never look baboons directly in the eye as it is likely to be interpreted as a threat.
11. Never spread out or form a full or partial circle around animals being observed.
12. At home, do not leave clothing or other personal items unattended outside

You are responsible for the behaviour of people who work for you, cooks and guides: please educate them in ways to reduce the risk of disease transmission.

These guidelines are subject to improvement and we will welcome your suggestions.
