

Protocol for Review by the NIH Veterinary Panel of At-Risk Chimpanzees for Which Relocation to the Federal Sanctuary System Operated by Chimp Haven, Inc. is Not Recommended by the Attending Veterinarian (AV) at the Sending or Receiving Facility

Background: In November 2015, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced it will no longer support biomedical research on chimpanzees, and all NIH-owned and NIH-supported chimpanzees that reside outside of the Federal Sanctuary are eligible for retirement and relocation to the sanctuary as required by the Chimpanzee Health Improvement, Maintenance and Protection (CHIMP) Act (1). A complicating aspect in relocating NIH-owned or supported chimpanzees is the fact that an increasing proportion are geriatric or have chronic diseases -- characteristics that increase the risk of relocation to those individuals. The NIH established a Working Group of the Council of Councils to provide advice and recommendations on factors to be considered when evaluating the safe relocation of these at-risk animals to the Federal Sanctuary. The Working Group's recommendations (2) were publicly presented at the May 18, 2018 NIH Council of Councils meeting. The report, along with the Council's recommendations and public comments were presented to the NIH Director in September 2018.

On October 18, 2018, NIH announced its decision (3) to develop standardized approaches for assessing each chimpanzee based on its health, behavior, social, and environmental requirements and to enlist the advice of a panel of veterinarians to inform final decisions regarding relocation to the Federal Sanctuary. While the standardized approach to assessing chimpanzee health and needs is finalized, relocations of chimpanzees to the Federal Sanctuary System will continue in a manner consistent with careful consideration of each animal's welfare and in line with the NIH's current retirement plan (4).

In November 2018, the NIH Veterinary Panel was established and charged with evaluating each case in which the veterinarian at either the sending or receiving facility recommends against relocation of a chimpanzee and with providing additional expert perspectives on the factors leading to the final relocation decision. The NIH accepts as final the Panel's recommendation on whether it is unsafe to relocate a chimpanzee and consequently it should remain and continue receiving care at its current facility.

The following protocol was developed to facilitate the review of animals in which relocation to the Federal Sanctuary System operated by Chimp Haven, Inc. [henceforth referred to as Chimp Haven] is not recommended by the AV at the sending or receiving facilities. Summarized below are the steps and communications that will take place within the Panel and between the sending institutions and Chimp Haven as the receiving institution.

The numbered items are the major steps that have been or will be taken, and the bullets address sub-issues to be considered in decision-making and communications.

1. Establishment of the NIH Veterinary Panel

- Panel members were identified and confirmed in November 2018.
- Panel members first met in December 2018.
 - Background and charge were reviewed.
 - Workflow processes were developed.
- Panel members developed a reviewer template form to ensure consistency of case reviews and to facilitate Panel discussions.

2. Panel Meeting Logistics

- Meetings will be weekly, but the frequency of meetings will be adjusted as needed to accommodate case review priorities.
- Duration of meetings will be adjusted as needed to accommodate case review priorities.
- Meetings will occur by teleconference or WebEx, with at least one in person meeting each month being scheduled.
- Meetings will involve only the three panel members; however, the panel reserves the right to invite other attendees (i.e., Office of Research Infrastructure Programs, Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare, Attending Veterinarians (AV) from sending or receiving facilities) via teleconference, WebEx, videoconference, or in person to any meetings as needed only to provide additional information for discussions of pending cases under review.
- Due to the small size of the Panel and the highly collaborative nature of its deliberations, there is no designated chair or lead for the Panel.

3. Order of Review of Cases

- The Panel will first review NIH-owned animals from the Alamogordo Primate Facility and will continue next with those at the Keeling Center for Comparative Medicine and Research followed by NIH-supported animals from the Southwest National Primate Research Center.
- Within each of the above sending facilities, animals classified as extremely high risk (Class V) will be reviewed first, followed by high risk animals (Class IV), and animals at other risk levels. Animals about which the AV at the sending facility expresses no concern about transferring will not be discussed.
- All three panel members must be in unanimous agreement when making decisions at each of the levels of review described below for each animal.

4. First Level of Review: Review of Animal Records

- Information for each animal and other support documents will be accessible only to the Panel through a SharePoint site.
- The Panel will be provided with a list of animals for which relocation to the Chimp Haven is not recommended by the AV at the sending or receiving facilities.
 - The list will include at a minimum name of the animal, any identification number(s), age, sex, class categorization assignment, social grouping information, and location.
- For each animal, the Panel will review the following materials:
 - The most recent 5 years of each animal's medical and behavioral records, but the timeframe and scope of the record review can be extended as needed.
 - A current medical problem list, including managed or well-controlled medical conditions, for each animal.
- The Panel will aim to review and discuss at a minimum 2-3 animals per meeting.
 - The Panel will determine review assignments, with one panel member being assigned to each animal as the lead reviewer.
 - The lead reviewer is responsible for completing reviewer documents for each assigned animal.
 - The Panel will discuss each animal, with the assigned reviewer for that animal leading the discussion.
- At this level of review, one of two recommendations can be made for each animal discussed.
 - The Panel agrees with the recommendation of the AV at the sending or receiving facilities not to relocate the animal; the animal will therefore remain at the sending facility.

- The Panel determines that additional information is needed from the AV at the sending or receiving facilities before making a decision.

5. Second Level of Review: Additional Information Is Needed from the AV at the Sending or Receiving Facilities

- The Panel will have discussions with the AV at the sending or receiving facilities as needed via videoconference.
- At this level of review, one of two recommendations can be made for each animal discussed.
 - The Panel agrees with the recommendation of the AV at the sending or receiving facilities not to relocate the animal; the animal will therefore remain at the sending facility.
 - The Panel disagrees with the recommendation of the AV at the sending or receiving facilities not to relocate the animal and will conduct a physical examination of the animal.

6. Third Level of Review: Physical Examination of Animals Is Needed

- If the Panel determines that a physical examination is needed for selected animals under review, at least two panel members (or if deemed needed by the Panel for a particular case, all three panel members) will travel to the sending facility to conduct a physical examination of the selected animals under review.
- At this level of review, one of two decisions can be made for each animal discussed.
 - The Panel agrees with the recommendation of the AV at the sending or receiving facilities not to relocate the animal; the animal will therefore remain at the sending facility.
 - The Panel disagrees with the recommendation of the AV at the sending or receiving facilities not to relocate the animal.
 - In the case of disagreement with the AV at the sending facility, the Panel will issue the health certificate so that the animal can be relocated to the Federal Sanctuary.
 - In the case of disagreement with the AV at the receiving facility or disagreement with both AVs at the sending and receiving facilities, the Panel will have further discussions with the AV at the receiving facility via videoconference; however, the AV at the receiving facility will make the final decision whether to accept an animal under consideration for relocation from a sending facility.

Cited References

1. NIH Will No Longer Support Biomedical Research on Chimpanzees
<https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/who-we-are/nih-director/statements/nih-will-no-longer-support-biomedical-research-chimpanzees>
2. Council of Councils Working Group on Assessing the Safety of Relocating At-Risk Chimpanzees
https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/sites/default/files/CoC_May_2018_WG_Report_508.pdf
3. Announcement of Agency Decisions on Recommendations from the NIH Council of Councils Working Group on Assessing the Safety of Relocating At-Risk Chimpanzees
https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/sites/default/files/Announcement_of_Agency_Decision-Relocation_of_At-Risk_Chimpanzees_508.pdf
4. NIH Plan to Retire All NIH-Owned and -Supported Chimpanzees
<https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/orip/cm/chimpanzeeretirement>

Additional References

1. Annual NIH Chimpanzee Management Reports on Costs for Maintaining Humane Care and Welfare of Chimpanzees
<https://orip.nih.gov/comparative-medicine/programs/vertebrate-models/chimpanzee-management-reports>
2. GAO-16-392 Report “NIH Chimpanzee Management Program: Consolidation Should Achieve Cost Savings, but a Clear Implementation Plan Is Needed”
<https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-392>
3. Highlights on the Use of Chimpanzees in NIH-Funded Research Since 2010
https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/council/chimpanzee_research