

**Review by the NIH Veterinary Panel of At-Risk Animals for which Relocation is not Recommended by
the Alamogordo Primate Facility Attending Veterinarian
September 12, 2019**

**The panel met with James M. Anderson, M.D., Ph.D., Director, and Robin Kawazoe, Deputy Director,
Division of Program Coordination, Planning and Strategic Initiatives (OD/NIH)**

Background

This is a summary of a meeting with the NIH Veterinary Panel (Panel), that was formed after NIH's acceptance, with modifications, of a recommendation from the Council of Councils (Council), following a Council Working Group on Assessing the Safety of Relocating At-Risk Chimpanzees. The Panel works independently of any NIH program, external stakeholder groups or organizations, and sites holding chimpanzees.

At-risk chimpanzees were defined in the Council report as those animals that are more likely than not to experience one or more severe adverse events because of the relocation and integration process. Severe adverse events include permanent or serious injury, long-term destabilization, or death within 6 months of arriving at the receiving facility (a timepoint based on the duration of the post-trip adjustment phase and the additional time for followup). Recommendation 6, as accepted by NIH was, "When either the sending or receiving facility recommends not to relocate a chimpanzee, independent expert veterinary opinion should be sought to inform the relocation decision."

NIH implemented this recommendation by establishing a panel of three NIH veterinarians from the NIH intramural research program with expertise in chimpanzees or other nonhuman primate veterinary medicine, but who are independent from the NIH Chimpanzee Management Program. The Panel was charged to review the records of the chimpanzees under consideration for relocation, discuss with the sending attending veterinarian his/her rationale for not signing the health certificate necessary for transfer, and consult with other veterinary specialists who have examined the animals, and if needed, to examine the chimpanzees.

As of September 10, 2019, there were a total of 188 NIH-owned or -supported chimpanzees located at the three non-sanctuary facilities: the Alamogordo Primate Facility (APF) in New Mexico, the Keeling Center for Comparative Medicine and Research (KCCMR) in Texas, and the Southwest National Primate Research Center in Texas. This meeting was to discuss the NIH-owned chimpanzees at the APF.

Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of the meeting was two-fold:

- 1) To develop a fuller understanding of the process followed by the Panel members in reviewing and deciding which chimpanzees could or could not be moved from APF to the Federal Sanctuary operated by Chimp Haven; and
- 2) To ascertain whether the Panel operated independently of any other Federal staff, received sufficient information such that they felt fully informed about their decisions, received

requested medical records about each chimpanzee, and followed a protocol in conducting their reviews leading up to their decisions.

Review Context and Process

The Panel noted that they conducted their review from the perspective that the chimpanzees should be transferred to the Sanctuary unless a facility demonstrates that the animals should not be transferred. The members noted that their decisions were based on doing “what is right for the animals.” Each panel member was assigned as a lead for the review of each animal, but all members reviewed each animal’s records, and they met as a group to discuss their respective reviews. The members stated that their decisions were consensus decisions, i.e., there were no dissenting opinions.

The Panel informed us that they operated independently of any other Federal staff, received all medical records they requested about the chimpanzees at APF, and followed a written protocol (Attachment) for conducting their reviews. Their determinations are based on the review of the medical records of each chimpanzee, discussions with the sending veterinarian, virtual site visits of APF (e.g., to view procedures) and Chimp Haven, a separate discussion with the consulting cardiologist to APF who has examined each chimpanzee, and meetings among the Panel members to discuss the information they obtained. As explained in the protocol, the Panel members were told that they could visit the facilities if such visits were needed for their review. Based on the information provided about each chimpanzee and its social group, the Panel did not request to visit the facilities.

The Panel shared several documents which summarize their reviews:

- 1) A spreadsheet organized by social groups. The Panel indicated that they reviewed each animal at APF individually, and then reviewed the animals as a member of one of 11 social groups. The social groups were identified for the Panel by APF. The spreadsheet included information on social group, duration of the group, social duration, i.e., how long the animal had been a part of the social group, and medical information, e.g., age, diabetes, weight, left ventricular hypertrophy, documented cardiac arrhythmias.
- 2) One-page summaries of their review of each animal at APF. Each summary contains date of birth, assigned animal number, sex, a statement about each animal, a medical condition summary, and a summary of the Panel’s detailed review and whether and why the animal should be moved or not.

The Panel members stated that all chimpanzees at APF have substantial health issues. They made the determination that transfer of the animals would accelerate their deterioration, and indicated that their determination considered the entire process of relocating the chimpanzees, i.e., transport, quarantine, introduction, and integration processes, changes in caretakers and veterinary staff, and adjusting to new surroundings.

The Panel stated that many of the animals had varying degrees of cardiovascular disease, that these conditions could cause the animals to die in transport, and that it was too much of a risk to move them. The panel was asked about a situation where a healthy animal was socially paired with a frail animal, and how they considered their decision whether or not to move the healthy animal. The Panel reiterated that they looked at each animal individually, and then looked at the animal as part of a social group, how long the group had been together, e.g., intensity and years of bond. The Panel noted the

long-standing nature of most of the social groups at APF and the desirability of keeping long-term groups together for the animals' health. The Panel reiterated that their decisions were based on the best interests of the chimpanzees taking into account their physical and psychological condition. The Panel stated they had spoken to the consulting cardiologist separately asking a series of questions, including the process used for determining the cardiovascular health of the animal and information about the algorithm used for categorizing which animal falls in a particular health category. The cardiologist answered their questions but did not offer (and was not asked for) an opinion on the decision of whether an animal should be moved. The Panel noted that each animal that has a cardiology problem also has another health problem.

The Panel reviewed the records about each animal, and not just its health categorization. While they said that they used the Categorization Framework developed by the Council of Councils Working Group, they did not depend on it for their decisionmaking, remarking that it lacked specificity.

The Panel stated it was very helpful to talk to the veterinary and other staff at the Federal Sanctuary to understand the process followed once a chimpanzee arrives at Chimp Haven. They mentioned that most chimpanzees are anesthetized three times during the process of relocation (pre-transport physical, potential anesthesia to move into a transport box, and anesthesia for an exam post-arrival at Chimp Haven). A chimpanzee with prior cardiovascular and respiratory problems having to undergo in a short period of time multiple incidents of anesthesia could pose a high risk for death.

The Panel noted that NIH Chimpanzee Management Program staff have been exceptionally responsive to their requests for information and scheduling phone interviews, and that APF was extremely open and willing to share the chimpanzees' medical records in a timely manner.

Recommendation for APF Chimpanzees

Based on their review of medical records, discussions with the Attending Veterinarian at APF and with the consulting cardiologist, and virtual site visits of APF and Chimp Haven, the Panel recommended that none of the remaining 44 animals at APF be relocated.