

TEN REASONS WHY PRIMATES ARE NOT PETS

An Pas

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- 1- Zoonotic Disease Risk: Primates are genetically closely related to humans thus carry many diseases that pose a human health risk. The majority of primates sold by the pet trade in the Middle East are illegally smuggled Old World primates that have not been subjected to any health screening. Old world primates (Baboons, macaques, vervets) may carry some of the zoonotic diseases listed in Table 1, many of which can cause serious illness or even death in humans. While testing for these diseases is possible, it is very expensive and both false positive and negative test results can occur. Much is still being learnt about the various potential zoonosis carried by primates and the best way to detect them. **ALL PRIMATES MUST BE CONSIDERED A DISEASE RISK.**
- 2- Lack of experienced medical care: Many veterinarians do not accept primates for examination or treatment because of the disease risk. Many human physicians will not be aware of the dangers or treatment modalities available for some primate diseases such as Herpes B.
- 3- Many human diseases are also contagious to monkeys, such as influenza, measles, chicken pox, and tuberculosis and can cause serious illness in primates. Many primates come from parts of the world where diseases such as tuberculosis and Hepatitis B are common in the human population and may contract these diseases from human caregivers and subsequently pass on the disease to any in contact humans.
- 4- To capture a juvenile primate it is very likely that the mother will have been killed and possibly used for bush meat. The baby that is clinging on to the mother will be removed for the pet trade. All species of primate receive 24 hour attention from the mother. The pet owner will not be able to provide this. Psychological disturbances similar to those seen in neglected children have been recognized in orphaned pet primates.
- 5- Hand reared primates grow up to be dangerous animals that are unable to integrate with their own species

Viral	Parasitic	Bacterial
HIV (AIDS) / SIV	Hookworm	Tuberculosis
Hepatitis B	Giardia	Salmonella
Herpes B / SA 8	Balantidium	Campylobacter
Yellow fever	Malaria	Shigella

Table 1. Zoonotic diseases of primates.



Baboon with canines that have been cut to prevent it biting its owner (©Chris Lloyd).

as they have not learnt any social skills from their peers. These group animals normally end up living a solitary and miserable existence. Isolated animals become depressed and show abnormal behaviour like pacing, over grooming or aberrant sexual displays. Monkeys can also inflict serious bitewounds.

- 6- Monkeys have specific dietary requirements. Primates do not have the same dietary requirements as humans. Most health problems in monkeys are caused by nutritional inadequacies.
- 7- Depending on the species a primate may live 20 to 50 years.
- 8- By nature, monkeys are messy and noisy. Keeping a monkey's cage and surrounding area clean is not an easy job. Monkeys are intelligent animals and environmental stimulation and intelligent cage design are essential. Monkeys will look for escape routes and they learn by watching you opening doors and locks. Be prepared for monkey escapes at all times.
- 9- The trade in endangered primates puts pressures on the survival of the species in the wild.
- 10- International trade of nonhuman primates is regulated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Most primates fall under Cites appendix II regulations; some do fall under Cites appendix I. All apes fall under Appendix I. This means that it is illegal to keep or buy apes (chimpanzees, gorillas) and that to import monkeys, permits are needed.

For further information see: <http://pin.primate.wisc.edu/aboutp/pets/>



Smuggled chimpanzee and owner (©Tom Bailey).