

ZAHP Update: December 2020

SARS-CoV-2 Updates and Year End Survey

Updated Guidance from AZA Felid TAG

Veterinary Advisors for the AZA Felid TAG recently released updated Guidance for Working Around Felid Species During the SARS CoV-2 Pandemic; available for download on here:
<https://zahp.aza.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID19-guidance-Felid-TAG-12-14-20.pdf>.

SARS-CoV-2 Confirmed in Snow Leopard and Wild Mink

The [United States Department of Agriculture](#) recently announced the first confirmation of SARS-CoV-2 in a snow leopard (*panthera uncia*) at the [Louisville Zoo](#). Three of the zoos snow leopards were tested for SARS-CoV-2 after showing signs of respiratory illness. All three cats are experiencing mild symptoms and are expected to recover fully. It is suspected that these animals acquired infection from an asymptomatic staff member, despite precautions taken by the zoo.

This finding, while concerning, isn't necessarily surprising. SARS-CoV-2 has previously been confirmed in other felids including tigers, lions, puma, and domestic cats, as well as in mink and domestic canines. Human to human transmission continues to drive the COVID-19 pandemic, and risk of transmission to humans from infected animals remains low. To date, mink are the only species believed capable of reintroducing the virus to humans, based on surveillance findings from farmed mink production facilities in Denmark. There is currently no evidence to suggest that felids or canids are capable of spreading the virus to humans.

SARS-CoV-2 was also recently confirmed in a free-ranging wild mink via surveillance conducted in wildlife surrounding positive mink farms in Utah. The strain isolated from this animal was identical to strains circulating in the farmed mink and various factors were used to determine the mink was wild and had not escaped from a nearby facility. Other wild populations sampled during this surveillance tested negative for the virus, and USDA Wildlife Services has stated that there is currently no evidence that the virus has established itself in wild populations.

This serves as a reminder that there is still much to learn about this virus and the various species that could be susceptible.

COVID-19 Relief Package

Congress recently passed a deal for a \$900 billion COVID relief package which includes \$284 billion for forgivable loans under the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), \$15 billion for live venues and cultural institutions via the Save our Stages (SOS) act, and \$20 billion in targeted EIDL grants for small businesses. This legislation was signed by the President on 12/27/2020.

Under the SOS program eligible entities such as museums, zoos, and aquariums may apply for Small Business Association grants of up to \$10 million based on lost gross earned revenues. In the first 14 days of implementation grants will be open to entities showing a 90% or greater loss in revenue, followed by eligible entities with a 70% or greater loss in the next 14 days, then to all other eligible entities. In order to apply "museum operators" must be a public or private non-profit and:

- Demonstrate a 25% reduction in earned revenue across corresponding quarters in 2019 and 2020.
- Have indoor exhibition spaces that have been subject to pandemic-related occupancy restrictions; and
- Have at least one theater, auditorium, or performance or lecture hall with fixed audience seating and regular programming.

A broad coalition including the Association of Zoos and Aquariums worked to get cultural institutions included as eligible entities for the SOS program.

A summary of the COVID relief provisions is available [here](#).

ZAHP Year End Survey

We recognize that this year has been incredibly tough on our community and that needs continue to shift. As we say goodbye to 2020, please consider taking a few moments to provide feedback on what offerings have been most helpful and what you'd like to see most in the future by filling out the survey at the link below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3Q9VNL3>.

Thank you for your continued participation in this effort. We wish you all a safe, healthy, and happy new year!

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