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# Hippos from ZOO Antwerp tested positive for Covid-19

The national veterinary laboratory of Sciensano has just confirmed the laboratory results: the two hippos Imani and Hermien are contaminated with the coronavirus. Other than a runny nose, both animals show no other symptoms and are doing well. The animals are in isolation and the keepers have further tightened security measures.

Last year, with the collaboration of the University of Antwerp, all the mammals in the ZOO Antwerp had passed the test for the coronavirus and no cases of COVID-19 had been reported in the zoo. It is thanks to the vigilance of veterinarian Francis that these cases have been detected today. The animals are not sick and always have a wet nose. What the veterinarian Francis said: "This time, they expelled glanders which I had tested as a precaution to verify the absence of bacteria. The result was negative. But given the news, I took the further decision to test the samples for COVID-19, which gave this surprising result. To my knowledge, this is the first known contamination in this species.

## Precautionary measures

The Antwerp ZOO immediately took the necessary precautionary measures. Veterinarian Francis confirms: "The samples have been sent to the Sciensano National Veterinary Laboratory for final confirmation. The hippo building was immediately closed to visitors and the handlers were tested. They are negative. Security measures have been tightened. . In addition to wearing a mask and disinfecting shoes, employees in contact with animals wear safety glasses and avoid contact with other caretakers and animals. " The building is closed and the healers have their own bubble. Hippos Hermien (41) and Imani (14.5) show no other symptoms of the disease, but are under the close supervision of their carers. The animals are temporarily out of sight of visitors. The building will reopen when the test values are negative again.

## Find the cause

The origin of the contamination is not known. None of the caregivers have recently contracted the

disease, they have not shown any symptoms. Is it possible that they were asymptomatic carriers and unknowingly transmitted the virus to animals? Impossible to know. Healers now wear additional protective gear, undergo a daily rapid test, and follow the corona protocol. At the slightest appearance of symptoms, they will stay at home in quarantine and undergo a PCR test. As is the case for everyone now. The safety of humans and animals remains the top priority at ZOO Antwerp. #ZOOset

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