

RESCUING ANIMALS AS A TOOL FOR LEGISLATION AND ENFORCEMENT

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Rescue centers and sanctuaries have been working on behalf of animals for a long time. AAP, rescue center for exotic animals in Almere in the Netherlands was founded in 1972 and has rescued thousands of animals over the years. In 2009 a satellite station of AAP was built and put into use in Villena, Spain. This facility, Primadomus, will develop over time into a second European rescue facility, solving problems with animals in the south west of Europe.

In the past, animal welfare was the main or only argument to help. In the last decade AAP has moved to help in cases where enforcement needed support, or when a trend could be stimulated resulting in new legislation. In 2003 AAP - in close collaboration with a coalition of animal welfare organizations - successfully worked to move the Netherlands to legislation that would put a ban on the use of apes in invasive research. The last remaining chimpanzees (formerly known as the BPRC chimps) were transferred to AAP in Almere when the new law came into place.

In the last few years AAP has been able to rescue many more primates from laboratories, circuses and illegal traders by working together with governments and institutions in different European countries. One of the most successful areas concerns the intake of former research primates. In 2010 and 2011 AAP used the method developed while working with the BPRC chimps, and successfully helped many more animals in close collaboration with laboratories, animal welfare organizations and campaigning organizations. This led to the transfer of almost 80 macaques from 3 different research institutes to AAP: two universities and one commercial research lab. In all cases not only the animals were helped, but agreements were signed that will lower the number of animals used in laboratories in the future. This also enables us to open the discussion between opponents and supporters of animal experimentation.

Crucial elements of these successes were a close collaboration with a leading animal welfare organization, absence of competition between rescue centers and the ability and knowledge to rehabilitate the animals. In the past, problems were encountered when the criteria for intake were set so high that the rescue did not happen. Other problems occurred when the opinions of animal welfare organizations and the

owning institutions were too far apart and no organization was able to bridge the differences or to create a basis of trust. At the moment there is still a huge need for rehoming partners for the animals after being rescued as the resocialization facilities (such as AAP) constantly need to create space for new arrivals.

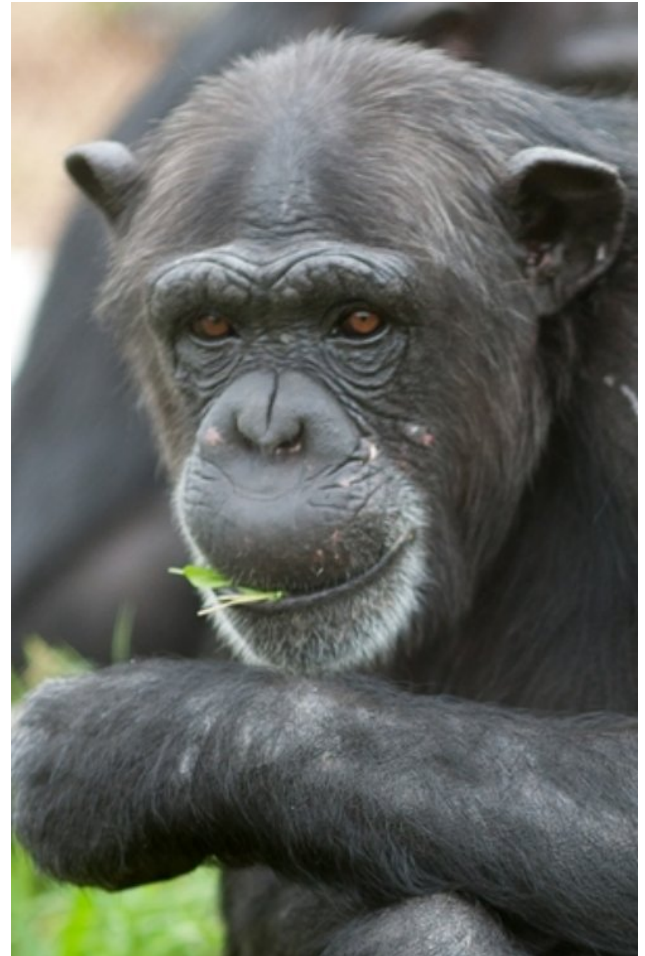


Figure 1. Karlien, one of the BPRC chimps. Photo: Petra Sotnius/AAP

AAP aims to work together with European sanctuaries to formulate a set of criteria that have to be met prior to transfer. This would not only help the animals that have already been rescued, but hopefully also convince research facilities to phase out the use of primates.