

Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination Program (Guests and General Public)

Date: March 30, 2022

To: Toronto Zoo Board of Management

From: Chief Executive Officer

Wards: All

SUMMARY

Since our last meeting of the Board of Management, the Ontario government released its plan to lift COVID-19 restrictions and regulations as part of its re-opening plan. On March 1, vaccination mandates were lifted for certain businesses that were previously required to have mandates under Regulation 364/20. On March 21, mandatory masking requirements were also eased. As these Government directives pertaining to certain COVID-19 health and safety measures were lifted, individual organizations have been provided the authority to keep health and safety policies in place.

Your Toronto Zoo endeavours to ensure a safe, inclusive and inviting experience for our team, animals, guests and community. Overall, we have experienced a relatively small number of staff reporting positive for COVID-19 and there have been no known cases amongst our COVID-19 susceptible animals. We attribute this to our vigilant and proactive approach to the implementation of various health and safety measures throughout the course of the pandemic to protect our team, animals, guests and community.

The systems and processes we have in place have proven to be effective at keeping our team and animals healthy and safe. As such your Zoo, with the support of our Wildlife Science team has made the decision to continue to take additional precautions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Executive Officer recommends that:

1. The Board of Management of the Toronto Zoo approve the continued implementation of the following policies until May 30, 2022 or until the high-risk animals in our care have been inoculated:

- a. requiring proof of vaccination for persons 12 years and older to enter the Zoo;

- b. requiring mandatory vaccination of all staff;
- c. requiring the wearing of masks in sensitive areas of all staff and contractors.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in this report.

DECISION HISTORY

Animals in our care remain vulnerable to the risks of COVID-19 and we are committed to employing all measures that help ensure their continued protection and wellbeing. Your Zoo is actively vaccinating COVID-19 susceptible species and we anticipate vaccination efforts will provide a greater degree of protection to reduce the risks of serious illness. Further as a requirement of the Animal Vaccination Program through Zoetis, we are required to adhere to strict biosecurity measures, including the requirement to wear personal protective equipment when in close proximity to our COVID-19 susceptible species.

Since March 2020, guests and members have demonstrated their support for the recommended measures. Your Zoo currently has more than 37,500 household members, which is a new record. We connect this increase in part to creating a safe environment during the pandemic.

Despite the lifting of mandates, COVID-19 is still present and circulating in our community and we appear to be experiencing the start of a sixth wave. Public health recommendations remain the same; encouraging vaccination (including 3rd dose), promoting masking, symptom screening and hygiene measures in an effort to reduce risks of serious illness and to reduce transmission rates. Guests choosing to visit your Zoo are supportive of measures ensuring their continued health and safety and also additional steps which may benefit animals.

We know that the science and our knowledge of the virus continues to evolve. It is understood that vaccination alone does not necessarily preclude transmission of the Omicron variant for persons who are fully vaccinated and we may see breakthrough infections. However, it is also understood that vaccination does offer protection against earlier strains and can potentially protect individuals from new and emerging variants which may also be present and circulating in the community. In late March there was a steady increase in reported cases based on limited PCR testing. Our test positivity count and other indicators such as wastewater analysis also suggest an increase in community infection.

As our understanding continues to evolve, we are adopting a precautionary approach to provide COVID-19 susceptible animals with some level of additional protection through the administration of vaccination prior to lifting our vaccine mandate.

COMMENTS

Currently, our COVID-19 susceptible animals continue to be vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 transmission from humans to animals. Even with high community vaccination rates, masking requirements and physical distancing, without any acquired or vaccine immunity, there is a concern for their health and welfare.

We have a responsibility to protect our COVID-19 susceptible animals, many of which are endangered. Although presently it is unclear what level of immunity vaccination will afford our animals, it is hoped that our vaccination efforts will provide a greater degree of protection and/or reduce risks of serious illness. It is expected that vaccine administration to the most highly susceptible COVID-19 animals' species in our care will be completed by May 30, 2022, at which time, your Zoo shall review its current practices in regard to our COVID-19 health and safety measures.

Our policies to date have served the animals in our care and we look forward to lifting them in the upcoming months.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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