

# Effects of Zoo Visitor Numbers on the Activity Pattern and Stereotypic Behaviour of Captive Okapi (*Okapia johnstoni*)

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A behavioural study was conducted to investigate how visitor numbers affect the activity pattern of captive okapi and if stereotypic behaviour in okapi is caused by stress from high visitor numbers. Observations of one okapi at Bristol Zoo and six okapi at Marwell Zoo were carried out. The activity budgets revealed that on average listening out to new stimuli (19.4%) and self-grooming (11.7%) were the most commonly performed of all behaviours in the okapi. However, all seven okapi were found to be exhibiting stereotypies. All subjects performed oral stereotypies and three individuals also displayed stereotypic pacing and one performed head circling. Spearman's rank correlation found no significant correlation between stereotyping and visitor numbers for the okapi at Bristol Zoo nor at Marwell Zoo. Nevertheless, a noisy zoo environment and unsuitable housing may be responsible for stereotypic behaviour and thus reduced animal welfare. The okapi enclosures examined in this study do not provide enough privacy for an elusive animal, which originates from dense rainforest to cope in a captive environment. Modifications to okapi housing and management strategies are recommended in order to meet the requirements of the species more closely in an attempt to reduce stereotyping and improve welfare in captive okapi.

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