

Penguins given 'happy pills' in soaking Britain

February 7 2014



Penguins are photographed swimming in their enclosure at London Zoo on July 17, 2013

After weeks of rain and wind, miserable penguins at a marine centre in England are being fed anti-depressants to cheer them up.

The 12 Humboldt [penguins](#) at the Sealife Centre in Scarborough, northeast England, were showing signs of stress as they shivered through one of the wettest winters on record.

So it was decided to slip pills into the fish they are fed.

Although the penguins are accustomed to cold weather in their natural habitat of Peru and Chile, the constant rain has come as a shock to them.

"They are just not used to this type of constant, prolonged bad weather that we are having," a spokeswoman for the centre told AFP.

"They are under treatment for stress and we hope the tablets will have a calming effect on them."

Keepers noticed that the penguins were tending to huddle together for warmth rather than plunging into the water, which is their [natural habitat](#), Lyndsey Crawford, the centre's display curator, explained.

"Hopefully their instincts will kick in and they will realise they are not in any danger," she said.

The penguins have no idea that they are taking pills and suffer no discomfort as a result.

"They literally don't know anything about it. It's a tiny small tablet that fits into the gill of the fish. It doesn't taste awful," she said.

The rainy winter has set records tumbling, being the wettest combined period for December and January for England since 1876-1877 and the second wettest since 1766, the Met Office has said.

Humboldt penguins are threatened with extinction in Peru and Chile due to a range of factors including climate change, the over-fishing of the species that they feed on and problems with becoming entangled in fishing nets.

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