

Unvaccinated snow leopard at San Diego Zoo catches COVID-19

July 25 2021, by Associated Press



In this Oct. 10, 2019, photo, provided by the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, Ramil, a male snow leopard, rests at the San Diego Zoo in San Diego. Ramil was tested for the coronavirus after caretakers noticed that he had a cough and runny nose on Thursday, July 22, 2021. The animal's stool sample was tested by the zoo staff and at a state-level lab, both of which confirmed the presence of the coronavirus, the zoo said in a statement the following day. It's unclear how Ramil got infected. In 2017, veterinarians removed his left eye due to a chronic condition he already had when he arrived at the zoo. Credit: Tammy Spratt/San

Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance via AP

An unvaccinated snow leopard at the San Diego Zoo has contracted COVID-19.

Caretakers noticed that Ramil, a 9-year-old male [snow leopard](#), had a cough and runny nose on Thursday. Later, two separate tests of his stool confirmed the presence of the coronavirus, [the zoo said in a statement Friday](#).

Ramil is not showing additional symptoms, the zoo said, but because he shares an enclosure with a female snow leopard and two Amur leopards, the staff assumes they have been exposed. As a result, the animals were quarantined and their exhibit was closed.

It's unclear how Ramil got infected.

In January, a troop of eight gorillas at the zoo's sister facility, San Diego Zoo Safari Park, contracted COVID-19 from a keeper who had the virus but showed no symptoms.

The gorilla troop, which has since recovered, became the first known example of the virus infecting apes.

The case prompted the zoo to request an experimental COVID-19 vaccine for [animals](#) for emergency use. The vaccine from Zoetis, animal health company that was once part of Pfizer, was administered to species most at risk of contracting COVID-19, including several primates and [big cats](#).



This Oct. 17, 2018, photo, provided by the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, shows Ramil, a male snow leopard, who was tested for the coronavirus after caretakers noticed that he had a cough and runny nose on Thursday, July 22, 2021, at the San Diego Zoo in San Diego. The animal's stool sample was tested by the zoo staff and at a state-level lab, both of which confirmed the presence of the coronavirus, the zoo said in a statement Friday, July 23. It's unclear how Ramil got infected. In 2017, veterinarians removed his left eye due to a chronic condition he already had when he arrived at the zoo. Credit: San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance via AP

However, Ramil had not been vaccinated before his infection.

There is no vaccine mandate for the staff, but unvaccinated employees are required to wear masks at all times, the zoo said.

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Citation: Unvaccinated snow leopard at San Diego Zoo catches COVID-19 (2021, July 25)
retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2021-07-unvaccinated-leopard-san-diego-zoo.html>

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