



Primates: Special Needs of Infants and Young Juveniles

What is the best environment for infants and young juveniles?



In most cases, captive infants and young juvenile primates do best when they remain with their biological mother (or a foster mother of the same species) in a species-typical social group. Ideally, they are kept with their mothers until their natural weaning age, which varies from species-to-species.



CAUTION! Infants and young juveniles raised without adequate socialization tend to have problems as adults. Throughout their lives, they are often **more difficult to socialize** and likely to **develop behaviors associated with psychological distress** such as excessive self-clasping and rocking or abnormal fear or aggression.

HAND-REARING PLANS

When relying on natural maternal rearing, it is still wise to have a plan for hand-rearing infants. This will help you be prepared in the event of maternal rejection or illness.

DID YOU KNOW?

Over 50 years of research shows that the psychological well-being of nonhuman primates relies on proper social development as infants and young juveniles.

What Does a Good Hand-Rearing Plan Include?

- Criteria for deciding if it is necessary to remove an infant from parental care
- Fostering practices, if fostering is an option
- Details of separation procedures
- A program to develop and maintain social skills by exposing the infant to peers or adults of the same or compatible species and, if you elect, other animals or people
- Details of hand-rearing (e.g., what and how often to feed the infant, and how it is fed, housed, and monitored for health and well-being)



This Animal Care Aid is part of a series developed to help with promoting psychological well-being in primates. Topics covered in the series include social grouping, supporting species-typical activities, and special considerations.

Questions? Email us at CenterforAnimalWelfare@usda.gov

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