

to facilitate introduction

of a captive Sumatran orangutan (*Pongo abelii*)

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Introduction

The Sumatran orangutan is critically endangered due to habitat loss, and only about 7000 individuals remain in the wild (1). The captive population in Europe is managed by the European Endangered Species Program (EEP) that currently numbers about 150 individuals in 30 institutions. Population growth in captivity is slow, and efforts target to improve breeding by creating new fission-fusion groups with several males in one group (2). With the opening of the reconstructed ape house in 2012, Zoo Basel started with a new group consisting of three males and three females from four different institutions. One male did not adapt well and developed a depressive mood. He did not interact socially neither with other conspecifics nor animal keepers and was reluctant to eat.



Result

After five weeks of treatment, the orangutan started to interact more with another male and particular animal keepers. Mental and physical condition improved over the treatment period and remained stable after cessation of medication.

Aim

The aim of the case report was to evaluate the effect of *Hypericum perforatum* L. for treatment of a depressive mood in an orangutan.



Method

Four months after arrival, the 10-years-old male of 37 kg body weight received 150 mg dried extract of *Hypericum perforatum* L. (Jarsin 300, Vifor, Villars-sur-Glane) twice a day. The dosage was doubled after one month. After nine months, treatment was tapered within 24 days. To improve palatability, the tablets were pestled and offered in raspberry sirup.



Conclusion

This is the first documented use of *Hypericum perforatum* L. in an orangutan. It was suitable to treat a depressive mood and may be an alternative to the limited experience with synthetic psychoactive drugs in great apes (3).

References

1. Singleton, I. et al. *Pongo abelii*. In: IUCN 2013. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, www.iucnredlist.org, downloaded on 27 February 2014.
2. van Schaik, C.P. The socioecology of fission-fusion sociality in orangutans. *Primates* 1999; 40:69-86.
3. Murphy, H.W., Chafel R. The use of psychoactive drugs in great apes: survey results. *Proc. Am. Assoc. Zoo Vet.* 2001, 244-249.