



Visitors affect drills (*Mandrillus leucophaeus*) and petting zoo animals at Parken Zoo

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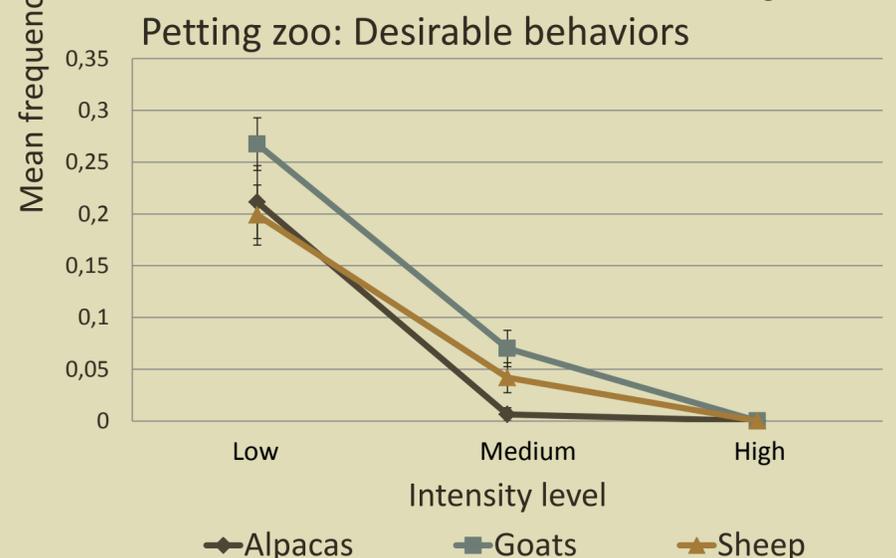
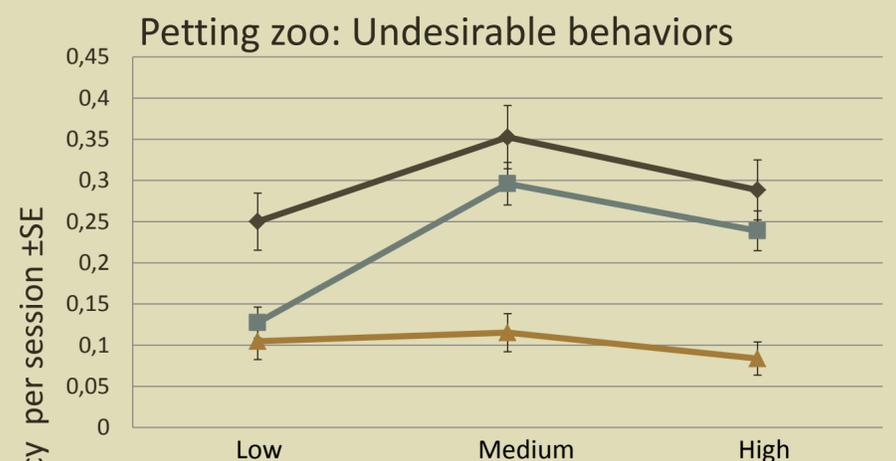
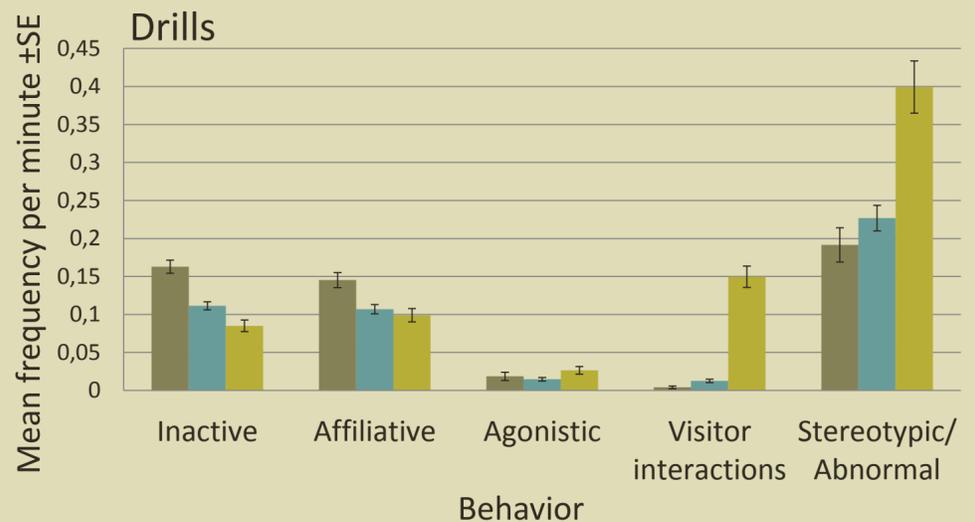
BACKGROUND: As visitors play a fundamental part of the zoo setting it is important to understand how zoo animals perceive these visitors. Visitor effects on zoo animals are not yet fully understood, however, most studies agree that visitors in many cases seem to be stressful to the animals which could have a negative impact on animal welfare.

AIM: To investigate how zoo visitors affect the behavior of the drills and petting zoo animals at Parken Zoo, Eskilstuna, and if these visitor effects have any welfare implications for the animals.

METHODS: Frequencies of behavior during different visitor intensity levels were compared to see if visitor intensity had an effect on animal behavior. In the petting zoo, time spent in retreat spaces was recorded and behaviors were divided into desirable and undesirable in the petting zoo setting.



RESULTS: In drills, all studied behaviors were affected by visitor intensity. In petting zoo animals, desirable behaviors were mainly seen during low intensity levels, and undesirable behaviors seen more during medium and high intensity levels in alpacas and goats. Alpacas spent the most time in retreat spaces, 36s/min on average.



CONCLUSIONS: The results indicate that drills find visitors stressful and that their welfare might be impacted by high visitor intensity. Goats and sheep seem to be relatively well adapted to their environment, while alpacas need further habituation to visitors to ensure their welfare is not compromised.