

## **What are zoos for?**

### **Specialist animal care**

[Presented by Helen Skelton]

It's clear animal care is a key part of many modern zoos. Animals have been known to experience mental health problems due to living in unsuitable surroundings. Progressive zoos are always working on trying to improve where their animals live.

I want to find out more about the latest techniques Chester Zoo uses to care for the animals.

I'm here with a zookeeper, Claire, and we're going to feed the orangutans.

How many orangutans have you actually got here?

[Claire]

We've got seven altogether – our adult male Pulu, two adult females, and they've currently got young babies at the moment, that's Emma and Subis, and we also have their previous offspring who are around about five years old now – Indah and Kirana.

[Helen]

What happens if they get sick?

[Claire]

If they do get ill – thankfully that doesn't happen very often – we're very lucky at Chester we've got onsite veterinary staff and facilities here.

[Helen]

Well, my bucket's empty so shall we step aside and let the orangutans have their lunch? Lead the way.

Progressive zoos are at the forefront of medical care. In April, Chester Zoo carried out a sinus operation on Vicky, an orangutan from Blackpool Zoo.

The procedure was a UK first, and there was even a doctor from a nearby hospital to advise.

Animals that are content are more likely to breed, and this is important for supporting endangered species. Chester Zoo has a breeding centre but they're also helping orangutans in the wild.

In Borneo they're building orangutan bridges to link up pockets of existing habitat. As animal habitats come under increasing threat from human damage, caring for endangered animals is ever-more important.

Of course there is still a way to go. Not all zoos work as closely with or care for their animals as they do here. And some just don't react well to being in captivity.

But at Chester they're building on the pioneering spirit of George Mottershead and are striving to improve animal care.