

THAT TIME OF

It is that time of year again, the dreaded annual checkup. Even for the wild animals in Busch Gardens, Florida, physical checkups are a hassle. Although they are put to sleep, it take many people, many days and heavy lifting machinery to accomplish the task. There are so many beasts and species on the zoo list that by the time this consuming task is completed, it is already another year and the entire process starts again. So, these expensive, difficult health checks go on nonstop.

Doesn't it seem strange that these animals need exams? They are kept under almost constant observation already, given healthy food and daily exercise. How much sickness can they have? In such a controlled environment, why doesn't the staff wait until one is hurt or ill, before going through the

procedures?

The Head Veterinarian says if the zoo waits until the animals show distress, it is usually too late and they almost surely die. The reason is that the exotic animals are especially difficult to diagnose because they instinctively hide their symptoms. You see, in the wild, if the show any signs of illness or even pain, it is perceived as weakness. There is neither tolerance, nor patience for anything other than the "healthy norm" in their society. If and when they do show hurt, let's say in a limp, they are immediately abandoned, sometimes forced away from the group.

The group, to protect itself will withdraw from this certain animal for two reasons. One, it cannot be held back, or wait for healing to take place when the time and season will not

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allow the herd to stop in the middle of its travel. Second, weakness always attracts the predator, and the group is afraid to be too close to this bait. Not all animals will respond in what we think is cruel, but most packs do.

Therefore, the Vet says, without these thorough blood tests and exams, there would be no way of knowing which species is ill and which are well.

God doesn't have to test us to know which one of us, humans are ill and well. But maybe we should examine each other. Look around you, there are many in our human society that instinctively hide their pain. Just like the animals, when we hurt, we are reluctant to show it in fear of also being ostracized.

What would people think if they knew? That I am too sensitive? That I am weak and need help? Perhaps, I am too weak and have

no friend to confide in. Or the entire process of admitting I am suffering is just a plain embarrassment.

Don't wait too long if you are now hurting. And for those of you currently strong, don't wait too long to be a friend. Sometimes it isn't until we are desperate and dying that we let out that cry for help. Unfortunately for some, it is too late, because no one has come around to give us our checkup.

I challenge you to be the physician and checkup on those around us. Take time to know who we are, be still and listen to our heartbeats. For all of us hurt on time or another, and whether we are not willing or unable to find the strength, we won't be able to show you our pain.

So, please look for us. It is that time of year. ♣