

## **The Star Online**

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### **Keep visitors away from animals that bite, zoos told**

PETALING JAYA: Visitors to zoos should never be allowed close to animals that may bite people, said an animal rights non-governmental organisation chief.

“We have warned both the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry and Perhilitan of the risks involved in allowing zoo visitors such close contact with wild animals,” said British conservation and animal rights group Nature Alert director Sean Whyte.

He urged people to stay away from zoos and wildlife parks until a “much greater degree” of supervision and public safety standards are in place.

Referring to the gibbon attack at the Malacca Zoo, he said the animal had probably been stressed or tormented by zoo visitors.

Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (Acres) president and founder Louis Ng said the onus was on zoo authorities to ensure visitor safety although some visitors neglected zoo rules.

He said there would always be people who tried to touch the animals although they were kept in enclosures.

“Zoos need to ensure that visitors don't come into contact with the animals as they can not only get injured but also risk disease transmission,” he said.

Ng said disease transmission could run both ways, pointing out that the common cold could kill gorillas.