

E-MAIL FROM: John F. Robins, Campaigns Consultant, Animal Concern, Post Office Box 5178, Dumbarton G82 5YJ. Tel: 01389-841-639, Mobile: 07721-605521. Fax: 0870-7060327. Animal Concern incorporates the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society which has been Campaigning for animals since 1876 E-MAIL: animals@jfrobins.force9.co.uk website: <http://www.animalconcern.org/>

The Board of Trustees,
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland,
Edinburgh Zoo,
134 Corstorphine Road,
Edinburgh EH12 6TS

Dear Board Member,

I would like to draw your attention to a short YouTube clip which was posted this week and allegedly shows an incident within the Giant Panda Research Centre in Sichuan, China. I understand this is the unit from which you lease your Giant Pandas and with whom you are co-operating in the captive breeding programme.

In the clip (taken by an internal security camera) a worker at the centre is seen striking a young panda cub at least four times. The blows are quite sharp and make contact with the panda's snout, probably one of the most sensitive areas of the animal. The panda recoils in pain from the blows.

It is claimed that after this clip was shown in China there was outrage over cruelty to the panda and the worker involved has been suspended from his job. I too am concerned at the way this animal was mistreated but I think the video shows a lot more than cruelty to a young panda.

Edinburgh Zoo has claimed that your Giant Panda breeding programme is part of a serious scientific exercise to return captive bred animals to the wild. The few seconds of video on the link below shows that not to be the case.

The clip shows three casually dressed people in the panda enclosure. The panda cub was following one of the staff members before he turns on it and hits it. Such close contact between humans and animals, especially young animals which might imprint on the humans as parent figures, makes it difficult if not impossible for such animals to be successfully returned to the wild.

Since, many years ago, the idea of bringing Giant Pandas to Edinburgh Zoo was first suggested by David Windmill, I have opposed the project because I believe it has little if any conservation value and is a cynical political and economic tool of the Chinese Government. You, as a Trustee of the RZSS, are paying \$US 1,000,000 into the system in which the panda cub in the video is being mistreated and rendered unsuitable for introduction into the wild.

I ask you to think again about your commitment to this very expensive and scientifically flawed project. Even if you cannot get out of your lease agreement with the Chinese, I urge you not to attempt to breed the pandas next year and for the remaining years of your £632,911.00 a year contract.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,
Animal Concern

Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOd4yi99qYw>