The Thoughts Of Two European Zoo Veterinarians On Why They Tend To Vaccinate Their Animals Less Than In North America

I had asked if feeding higher levels of concentrates in the US might predispose hoof stock to clostridial diseases and if better control of stray dogs and cats and the absence of raccoons might account for a lower risk of infectious disease.

Zooparc de Beauval Saint-Aignan France:

I think there is not a better way. It’s only 2 different approaches. In North America preventive medicine is far more used than in Europe. In my collection for example if I never had a case of a particular viral or bacterial disease I’m not going to vaccinate except if I know that there’s a high risk. If one day I have a case, then I’ll start vaccinating. In North America in general, they prefer vaccinate anyway to be sure not to have the first case. It’s 2 different approach with both good arguments.

The other thing as you mention is that, I do think, there’re more wild and feral animals in North America than here in Europe. So the risk maybe is higher.

Concerning West Nile Virus, we had a few cases in the south of France but it’s not endemic yet.

Kristiansand Zoo and Amusement Park Kristiansand, Norway:

I think you might be right. But it probably varies a bit between different European Zoos.

I did my residency in Toronto Zoo and we also vaccinated a lot more than we do at the zoo I work now. At the zoo I work now there has never been a lot of vaccinations. I was wondering about this when I first started, but looking at records and talking to previous staff, it does not seem to have been relevant cases that would have been prevented by a vaccine. On the other hand, as long as the vaccine is not harmful, maybe we should vaccinate more. With regards to husbandry practices or the cold climate I don’t know if that plays a role. We do use a lot of browse for our giraffes and a lot of hay for our camels. We try to keep the concentrate levels low.