



**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR**  
**Ministry for Health & Environment**  
**Joshua Hassan House**  
**Secretary's Lane**  
**Gibraltar**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **GET OUR MONKEYS BACK TO NATURE**

**Campaign being planned for the New Year... while bites are down by 50% from recent years.**

The Government's Barbary Macaque Plan, which is currently being developed, is being introduced in stages in order to advance some of its provisions. This was confirmed by Minister for the Environment Dr John Cortes at the last meeting of Parliament, and is expanded upon below.

The Plan, which will include closer monitoring of the monkeys and their movements, is being developed with the involvement both of local and international experts and with the support of the International Primate Protection League (IPPL) and the Born Free Foundation, as well as Notre Dame University of Indiana, USA.

Already the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic has been supported with more resources which has boosted the contraceptive programme this year.

In addition, the Upper Rock Management Team has been involved in a habitat enhancement programme. This aims at opening up dense scrub in order to increase the area available for the macaques to forage. These monkeys feed naturally largely on open ground and so through the years the neglect of firebreaks and growth of thick scrub has decreased the land available to them on the Upper Rock, which may have contributed to their moving into built-up areas.

As an additional strand to the Plan, the RGP will, through the new District Offices, be working with the Department of the Environment, the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic and GONHS to increase public awareness of the dangers of feeding monkeys in built-up areas. This attracts monkeys which come to associate humans with food and can lead to incidents which can lead to a bite.

Despite recent publicity as a result of a bite in Main Street, "ape" bite statistics as recorded at St Bernard's Hospital show here have been half the incidents as compared to recent years, as shown in the table below (figures are for January to October each year).

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2007: 94  
2008: 110  
2009: 120  
2010: incomplete data available  
2011: 104  
2012: 59

The Department of the Environment and the macaque team will also be working within schools to increase awareness of how not to interact with the monkeys and how to recognise their facial language.

The public is asked to cooperate by NEVER feeding the monkeys, whether in built up areas or the Upper Rock. In this way we can all work together and GET OUR MONKEYS BACK TO NATURE. This is the theme of the first ever Government-led awareness campaign currently being prepared, aimed at achieving a macaque population in balance with the natural environment and impacting as little as possible on humans.

Meanwhile the Government is pursuing the possibility of relocating up to 120 monkeys to north Africa.

Dr Cortes, who is a published author on the biology of Barbary Macaques, as well as co-editor of the most recent book on Macaque Biology said, "This Government for the first time is applying real science to planning a strategy to better manage our monkeys. It will take time for them to "unlearn" the behaviour that years of mismanagement has taught them. They've lost their fear of humans and regard them as a source of rich food, like chocolates and biscuits. It won't be easy, but if the whole community joins in and supports the campaign, we can succeed."