

OVAG Vets Meet and Discuss Orangutan Conservation

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YOGYAKARTA - As many as 60 veterinarians working at rehabilitation and conservation centres from Indonesia and abroad have joined the Orangutan Veterinary Advisory Group (OVAG) meeting at Faculty of Veterinary Medicine UGM, Tuesday (4/8). The meeting lasting from 1 - 6 August was joined by vets from the UK, Czech Republic, Germany, the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia. "The vets working at orangutan conservation centres in Sumatera and Kalimantan meet annually at UGM," said Dr. drh. Wisnu Nurcahyo, initiator of the event, when met at the Faculty.

The parasitology lecturer said they discussed developments in conservation and rehabilitation centres as well as medical treatment of orangutan.

Wisnu said many problems were brought up by the vets in the meeting, including diseases that currently affect orangutans that may cause death, parasitic diseases such as malaria, protozoa *Balantidium coli*, filariasis, scabies, and strongyloidiasis. Malaria that once was not found in orangutan has now emerged many times. "As high as 60-70 percents of diseases in orangutan come from parasit," he said.

The UGM Faculty of Medicine during the OVAG this time, said Wisnu, facilitated training in orangutan rehabilitation, including the methods, disease diagnose, model for orangutan release, monitoring of feed and breeding.

Drh. Citra Kasih, from Jejak Pulang rehabilitation centre in East Kalimantan said one factor faced by them is the decreasing habitat for orangutans. It is difficult for the animals to find their habitat

because much of the habitat has been converted into plantation and mining areas as well as forest damage due to fires. “Many of the orangutans that are ready for release have to stay in the centre still,” said she. In her opinion, the centre and regional governments have to pay attention to preserving a habitat suitable for orangutans. “Strong and supportive regulations are needed in order that orangutan habitat would not continue to decrease,” she concluded.

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