

## Lingua Inglese - Generico/Scientifica

### ESEMPIO DI COMPrensIONE SCRITTA

#### Livello B1

#### Argomento: Baboons - Aggressività nei babuini

Is aggressive behaviour innate or learned? In baboons, it seems, it is learned. An experiment reported in *Public Library of Science Biology* surprisingly suggests that the level of violence in baboon society is culturally determined.

The story begins in 1993, in the Masai Mara Reserve in Kenya. Robert Salopsky, a primatologist at Stanford University, had already been studying the reserve's olive baboon population for five years, when one of the troops (the name given to a group of baboons), which he called the "Forest Troop", suffered an epidemic of tuberculosis. Half of its males died. The source of the infection was a rubbish dump which the animals used as a food supply. The control of this dump was contested with another troop. The males who became infected and died were the more aggressive individuals in the troop—those best at fighting for food. The result was that the level of aggressive behaviour in the troop fell markedly.

Dr. Salopsky, disturbed by what had happened, turned his attention to another troop 50km away and did not go back to his original research site and the "Forest Troop" until 2003. Ten years after the natural death of aggressive individuals had started, the behaviour of the troop's males was still pacific. He was particularly surprised because every male who had been in the "Forest Troop" in 1993—not just the ones who had died of tuberculosis—had gone. All of the troop's males were new arrivals. (Male olive baboons often migrate and join troops different from the ones they were born into.)

Dr. Salopsky decided to investigate further. He compared the troop's behaviour both to what it had been before the outbreak of tuberculosis, and to that of the other troops he had studied. Some things had not changed. Top-rank males in all groups stayed boss for the same length of time—a year. Confrontations between males, where one takes the place of the other without any explicit violence, happened as often in one group as in another. But something was different. In the new Forest Troop, males tended to "confront individuals of their own size and rank", whereas in more traditional groups top monkeys tend to terrorise those at least two ranks below them—animals that cannot fight back. The new Forest males were also less likely to attack females.

However, pacific behaviour is unusual in baboon troops, which suggests that it is an unstable, temporary arrangement. In particular, it might be disturbed if several males with different ideas arrive at the same time.

**A. According to the report, Dr. Salopsky's research:**

1. finished with the death of several animals.
2. started in 1993.
3. involved the study of different baboon troops in Kenya.
4. concentrated entirely on the "Forest Troop".

**B. Which of the following is NOT given as a consequence of the outbreak of tuberculosis among the "Forest Troop"?**

1. Dr. Salopsky moved away from his original research site.
2. Half of the male population died.
3. The source of infection was removed.
4. The animals became less aggressive.

**C. In 2003, Dr. Salopsky found that the male population of the new "Forest Troop":**

1. had arrived from other troops.
2. were born into the "Forest Troop".
3. were still dying of tuberculosis.
4. had reverted back to aggressive behaviour.

**D. After further observation, Dr. Salopsky found that the new "Forest Troop" males:**

1. did not confront other males.
2. usually confronted males of their own rank.
3. were more aggressive with females.
4. did not behave differently at all.

**E. In the final paragraph the author says that the behaviour of the baboons in the "Forest Troop":**

1. will definitely change in the near future.
2. will probably remain the same indefinitely.
3. is typical of baboon troops in other places.
4. may change again in the future.

**ANSWER KEY**

**A3 B3 C1 D2 E4**