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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Zoos Stage Nuts-and-Carrots Donation Drive

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A cheeky monkey holding a bit of fruit.

Russian zoos are launching campaigns to collect fruit, vegetables and nuts from animal lovers, though the drive does not appear to be related to a recent ban on Western food imports.

Those participating in the project include zoos in Krasnoyarsk and Novosibirsk in Siberia, Penza and Ivanovo in central Russia, and Belgorod in the country's south, according to regional media reports.

Well-wishers have been asked to donate anything from apples and pumpkins to elderberry, acorns and honey. The food will be used to feed all creatures great and small: from birds to bears, which gorge on apples prior to hibernation, news site Temapenza.ru reported.

Donations could reach up to several tons of foodstuffs per zoo and could last until mid-winter, reports said.

Food has become a sensitive issue in Russia after the Kremlin embargoed in early August imports of most fruits, vegetables, dairy and meat products from Western nations that imposed sanctions against Moscow over its alleged meddling in the Ukrainian civil war.

Year-on-year food price growth reached double digits for the first time in three years following the food ban, according to State Statistics Service.

Animals were also hit by the embargo: Media reported that most herbivores at the Moscow zoo were getting their daily fare from Poland and Hungary, though the zoo has yet to join in on the latest donation drive.

Most drives are set to last until October, at which point it will be clear whether the agriculture-savvy Russians are hoarding their food in the face of the sanctions or willing to share harvest leftovers with their furry friends.

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