

Sanctuary Support Program, LLC

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Ms. Lisa Wathne
Captive Exotic Animal Specialist
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
501 Front Street
Norfolk, VA 23510

January 8, 2004

Dear Ms. Wathne,

Thank you for your e-mail. Please find enclosed the signed original of my comments on conditions at the AWR.

As you are not sure whether the tiger cub had been sedated (although there is little doubt in my mind that he had), I don't think we should give them grist for their mill by my commenting.

I wish you and your organization well in your efforts to rescue and save all the animals from these deplorable conditions.

Yours sincerely



James Mahoney.

P.S. Please let me know if you wish me to return the videotape.

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January 6, 2004

To whom it may concern,

I have been asked by the organization, *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)*, for my professional opinion on a videotape shot at the Amarillo Wildlife Refuge (AWR) in Texas. This tape shows brief clips of caged chimpanzees, capuchin and spider monkeys, a gibbon and a caracal (a lynx-like cat), as well as a tiger cub outside a cage setting.

I have been a veterinarian for almost 40 years, and have worked with a wide range of primate species over the last 36 years, including chimpanzees and the other species of nonhuman primates shown in this tape.

The general impression of this facility is one of abject filth. Floors of cages and areas in between are strewn with rotting fruit, discarded plastic bottles and plastic bags and other unidentifiable debris. In some areas, there is a carpet of at least one-inch thickness on the floor of rotting sunflower seeds, alive with squirming maggots. Flies inundate everywhere, in the thousands! This accumulation represents days, if not some weeks, of failure to make any visible attempt at cleaning. The thick coating of brown-colored dirt on the surfaces of the woven-wire and expanded-metal mesh of the spider monkey and chimpanzee cage walls, caused by the buildup of oily secretions from the skin and fingers of the inmates, and the staining of walls and wall-mounted feeder trays, is further evidence that no daily, or even weekly, cleaning procedure is in place.

The closest I could see of any attempt to provide psychological enrichment to the primates, as mandated in the Animal Welfare Act, is a small, red, plastic bucket carried by one of the chimpanzees, and the petting of the hands of the capuchin monkeys, presumably by the narrator of the "documentary." I cannot imagine any effective program of psychological or environmental enrichment being possible, however, in the midst of such filth and squalor.

One scene shows an apparently failed attempt to dart an adult gibbon by blowpipe in order, I have been informed, to permit removal of her baby. Blowpipes are potentially dangerous devices to use on any small species because of the operator's inability to guarantee a precise aim with them, and should be used in only extreme emergency situations, when no suitable alternative is available. Gibbons are long, slender animals, offering nothing in the way of extensive muscle mass suitable at which to aim a dart. In this case, the procedure was attempted under the most dangerous conditions. First, the primary enclosure was a corn crib, which I would estimate was approximately 18 feet in height at the center of the

cone-shaped roof, and 10 -12 feet high to the top of the side walls. This risked the female's falling a great height to the floor, either in response to the sudden fright of being hit with a dart or, once she would have begun to succumb to the effects of the tranquilizing agent in the dart, falling unconscious with the potential for serious physical, and possibly even fatal, injury to her and/or her infant. Secondly, attempting to dart such a relatively small and slender animal in such a large, unconfined space risked the dart penetrating some critical part of the body, such as an eye or the face, the abdominal or chest wall, which are relatively thin in gibbons, with serious damage to underlying organs, or striking bone or major superficial arteries or veins. The dart striking anywhere on the infant's body would have had serious consequences, no matter what.

The narrator describes a cut on a chimpanzee's ear which has been there for quite some time, "hasn't been treated, keeps re-opening -- of course the flies keep getting on it." While it might be argued that scratches or bites to ear margins from cage partners are quite common in chimpanzees, and that they may heal slowly, often because the chimp, himself, picks at them, adequate and appropriate medical care, such as administration of an oral or topical antibiotic, must be given. Examination of the facility's medical records or daily care log, a requirement mandated by the Animal Welfare Act, should provide the answer to whether appropriate medical care had been given. Even so, the constant irritation caused by the flies landing on the wound, and the chimpanzee's physical response to the aggravation, would certainly have delayed healing.

I have never witnessed such deplorable conditions in any animal sanctuary or zoo, in even the poorest, most deprived countries in which I have worked or visited over the years in Africa, South America or India. That defenseless, sentient creatures are forced to lie and sleep in such filth, as clearly evidenced in this film, constitutes nothing less than perpetrated cruelty. The severe detrimental effect on the psychological and emotional well-being of the animals living under such conditions goes without saying.



James Mahoney, D.V.M., Ph. D.
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