



Savethechimps.org

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To Whom It May Concern:

I just watched a video of the conditions at the Amarillo Wildlife Refuge sent to me for comment. I don't know why the existence of roadside zoos continues to amaze me but it does. And this one is called a refuge! As a primatologist with over 20 years experience working with captive chimpanzees I was appalled by what I saw on all counts.

Our organization took over a lab who housed over two hundred chimps and 60 monkeys about a year ago. This lab had the worst record of primate care in the history of the Animal Welfare Act – not just any lab but the worst lab.

What I found when we took over the lab horrified me. The video of the Amarillo Wildlife Refuge makes this lab when we arrived look good in comparison. Having worked at some of the best, and worst, chimpanzee facilities in this country this video broke my heart with is not so easy to do these days.

Several of the staff watched the video with me. These are the people who clean the chimps' cages everyday and they are new to the primate scene. These naive folks kept asking me if this was against the law and who is watching out for these animals? I was at a loss on how to answer their questions. Who is watching out for the chimps? USDA sends inspectors, who for the most part are dedicated people, to inspect but then the agency refuses to back them up.

As we watched the flies, the filth and the maggots half the people were in tears – the other half left the room to get away from these disturbing images. This kind of filth doesn't come from missing a day or two of cleaning or even a week or two. This is the result of months of neglect.

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The issue of enrichment for the chimps, just simply something to do, was absent but I am not even going to comment on that since their living conditions are enough to comment on. I think the footage of the woman, trying so desperately to get this not so small baby tiger to pose for a picture pretty much sums up the place.

She was so rough in her handling of the tiger, she was so hell bent on getting the photo and did you notice the baby tiger was in the people's lap for just a split second while the flash went off? This baby is about to outlive his usefulness to the place. I wonder what this tiger's next stop will be and where the replacement little tiger will come from.

Everything about the Amarillo Wildlife Refuge is wrong. The fact that it is a USDA inspected facility and can get away with the conditions it has been getting away with for some time and the obvious message from the lady with the tiger that the animals who live there are her livelihood. That the refuge gives them nothing back in return is heartbreaking.

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