

Laughing Valley Ranch

P.O. Box 1810, Idaho Springs, CO 80452

Laughing Valley Ranch, which is owned by William Lee III, has failed to meet minimum federal standards for the care of animals used in exhibition as established in the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has repeatedly cited Laughing Valley Ranch for numerous infractions, including failing to provide animals with adequate veterinary care, failing to handle animals properly, failing to keep enclosures clean, failing to provide animals with sufficient shelter from inclement weather, failing to provide safe enclosures, failing to give potable water to animals, failing to have an effective “pest”-control program, and failing to maintain records. The USDA has also filed two complaints against Laughing Valley Ranch, one in 2016 for over 25 alleged violations of the AWA and one in 2013 for over 100 alleged violations. In 2013, William Lee also pleaded guilty to one count of cruelty to animals in a Clear Creek County court in response to a case in which animals were seized from the Laughing Valley Ranch the previous year. Contact PETA for documentation.

November 16, 2018: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available to accompany the inspector for an inspection.

March 1, 2018: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to a sheep who had a heavily matted coat that was in need of shearing; to four alpacas who had

overgrown hooves; and to Murphy, a wether observed to be in poor body condition. Laughing Valley was also cited for failing to keep enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals; failing to provide a Highland steer with sufficient shelter against inclement weather and direct sunlight; failing to properly clean an enclosure that had an accumulation of feces covering approximately half of the enclosure, which held nine animals; and failing to have complete acquisition/disposition records.

December 11, 2017: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process.

October 7, 2017: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a Program of Veterinary Care available at the time of inspection and failing to have a current and accurate inventory list and acquisition/disposition records available for review.

October 3, 2017: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process. After arriving at the facility, a USDA inspector called and spoke to the licensee, who said that he was at the premises but unavailable for inspectors to conduct an inspection.

July 19, 2017: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to two alpacas and one goat who had excessively overgrown hooves, failing to have a Program of Veterinary Care available at the time of inspection, failing to have a current and accurate inventory list and acquisition/disposition records available for review, failing to keep enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals, failing to provide sufficient shelter against inclement weather for three animals,

and failing to provide clean water in an enclosure holding nine animals. The water was a greenish-brown color with an excessive buildup of green debris covering all the interior surfaces of the only water receptacle.

May 3, 2017: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process. The licensee was contacted by phone, at which time he informed inspectors that he was not at the facility and that he was worried his employee would be unable to locate any records. He stated that this inspection would have to be considered an attempted inspection.

February 22, 2017: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process. The licensee was contacted by phone, at which time he told the inspector that he was going to have construction performed on his driveway that afternoon and an inspection could not be conducted.

December 6, 2016: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a Program of Veterinary Care available at the time of inspection, failing to have a current and accurate inventory list and acquisition/disposition records available for review, failing to keep enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals, and failing to keep premises clean.

June 24, 2016: The USDA filed a complaint against William Lee III, DBA Laughing Valley Ranch, for over 25 alleged violations of the AWA.

June 14, 2016: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to several hoofstock animals who had heavily matted coats in need of

shearing; failing to have a Program of Veterinary Care available for review at the time of inspection; failing to have a current and accurate inventory list and acquisition/disposition records available; failing to keep enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals; failing to provide sufficient shelter against inclement weather for three llamas and three goats, who also had no shelter from direct sunlight; and failing to keep premises clean.

June 13, 2016: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process. USDA officials contacted the licensee as he was leaving the facility. The licensee stated that he had an appointment and was unable to stay for an inspection and that no one else was available to accompany the inspectors at this time.

January 29, 2016: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process.

October 20, 2015: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process.

July 13, 2015: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process.

April 7, 2015: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process.

September 19, 2014: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to a reindeer calf who was limping on his left hind limb "as much or worse" than during the August 26,

2014, inspection; failing to keep enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals; failing to have properly completed acquisition/disposition records; and failing to have all records available for review.

August 26, 2014: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to a reindeer who had excessively overgrown hooves and a reindeer calf who was limping on his left hind limb; failing to keep enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals; failing to properly clean an outdoor enclosure that had an excessive accumulation of excreta and affected six animals; failing to have an effective “pest”-control program (a broken bag of feed spilled on the floor in the food storage shed, where there was an accumulation of rodent feces on the floor as well as on other surfaces in the shed, and there were numerous flies throughout the facility); and failing to have records available for inspection.

July 14, 2014: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process.

June 6, 2014: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process. The licensee was reached by phone but was not available to accompany USDA officials on an inspection.

February 27, 2014: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to a reindeer who was seen limping and holding a leg up when at rest, failing to properly handle a reindeer who escaped from a handler (see December 5, 2013) and ran through city streets and swam through a reservoir while being pursued by law enforcement “so she

experienced significant behavioral [sic] stress and was at great risk for injury or loss of life,” failing to properly clean an excessive accumulation of excreta from an outdoor enclosure holding 10 animals, and failing to have records available for review during the inspection.

December 6, 2013: The USDA filed a complaint against William Lee III, DBA Laughing Valley Ranch, for over 100 alleged violations of the AWA.

December 5, 2013: A reindeer being used as a prop in a holiday display escaped from a handler. William Lee was playing Santa Claus at the La Riva Mall in downtown Dillon, Colorado, while the reindeer was outside for petting and pictures. The reindeer was spooked and escaped the enclosure. She was loose until the following night, when she was tracked down and recaptured. The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch on February 27, 2014, for this incident.

November 8, 2013: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to a white pygmy goat who was found dead inside one of the structures. The animal caretaker had not noticed the goat either was not doing well or had already died when he provided food earlier. The facility was also cited for failing to have records available for inspection; failing to provide an appropriate enclosure for Mikoh, a husky who was tethered and unattended; and failing to keep enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals.

July 11, 2013: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to a reindeer who was seen limping and holding a leg up when at rest and an angora goat who had a thick layer of wool in need of shearing (temperatures exceeded 80 degrees Fahrenheit during the

inspection); failing to have records available for inspection; failing to provide three Scottish Highland cattle with adequate shelter from inclement weather; failing to properly clean an enclosure holding 10 animals, which had an excessive accumulation of excreta; and failing to have an effective “pest”-control program, as evidenced by numerous fly accumulations in two enclosures.

July 3, 2013: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to a reindeer who was seen limping and holding a leg up when at rest and an angora goat who had a thick layer of wool in need of shearing—temperatures exceeded 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Laughing Valley was also cited for failing to allow an inspection at the licensee’s residence, where he was housing two dogs used for exhibition purposes; failing to keep enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals; failing to provide three Scottish Highland cattle with adequate shelter from inclement weather; failing to properly clean two enclosures holding a total of 16 animals (both had an excessive accumulation of excreta); and failing to have an effective “pest”-control program, as evidenced by numerous fly accumulations in several enclosures.

May 15, 2013: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for refusing to allow USDA officials to conduct a routine inspection.

March 20, 2013: William Lee pleaded guilty in a Clear Creek County court to one count of cruelty to animals. (See June 8, 2012.) As part of a plea bargain, he agreed to two years of unsupervised probation.

February 7, 2013: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to keep enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals and failing to provide

two sheep with adequate shelter for protection from inclement weather.

September 5, 2012: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process.

June 8, 2012: More than 100 animals were seized from Laughing Valley Ranch by the Clear Creek County Sheriff’s Office and 13 other agencies because of concerns that they were living in unsanitary conditions.

June 1, 2012: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to the following: Forest, a husky/malamute who was noted to be limping on his left hind leg; Oscar, a goat who appeared to be very thin and was noted to have a severe limp (the licensee said that Oscar had been injured four days prior and wasn’t scheduled to see the veterinarian for five more days); and a juvenile reindeer who was noted to have a thick yellow nasal discharge. Oscar and Forest were seized by the Clear Creek County Sheriff’s Department animal control officer because they needed veterinary care for their serious conditions.

In addition, Laughing Valley was cited for failing to provide daily observation of all animals to better assess their health and failing to provide adequate veterinary care for the following: two reindeer who had a thin body condition, two llamas who appeared to have swelling on the right side of their faces, and three Shetland sheep ewes who had a thin body condition.

The USDA also cited Laughing Valley for failing to keep enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals, failing to feed animals as often as necessary and with sufficient quantity and nutritive value as to maintain all animals in good health, failing to feed food in a manner as to avoid

contamination (hay was being fed on the ground in a couple of enclosures, which were contaminated with fecal matter, and two feed receptacles used for reindeer had fecal matter mixed in with the feed), and failing to have a sufficient number of adequately trained employees.

May 17, 2012: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate bedding in outdoor enclosures holding dogs; failing to keep enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals; failing to properly clean an outdoor hutch holding two Flemish giant rabbits, which had an excessive accumulation of excreta, hair, and other debris; and failing to maintain complete records of acquisition and disposition.

May 10, 2012: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process.

April 5, 2012: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to a reindeer who was lying down with shallow rapid breathing. When she was able to rise, the “carpal joints” in her front legs were abnormally enlarged, and she walked with a staggering gait with her nose almost touching the ground while breathing heavily. She also appeared thin, and the owner stated that he would “see her stand at the feed trough for hours.” In January, the attending veterinarian had noted that her teeth had been worn to the gums, making it difficult for her to eat hay or pelleted feed, which was the diet that was offered. There was also an extremely underweight llama named Mama. Both the reindeer and llama were seized by the Clear Creek County Sheriff’s Animal Control Department during the inspection. In addition, Forest, a 15-year-old husky, was noted to be in thin body condition with an asymmetrical face and reddened and

swollen gums, and four animals had overgrown hooves. Two of them were goats who were noted to have hooves that were severely overgrown.

The USDA also cited Laughing Valley for failing to provide two German shepherd dogs with adequate shelter from the elements, failing to provide dogs with sufficient bedding, failing to keep enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals, failing to provide clean water to 26 animals, and failing to have records available for USDA officials to review.

February 1, 2012: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide several dogs with adequate protection from the elements, failing to keep enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals, and failing to properly maintain acquisition and disposition records for goats and reindeer.

January 12, 2012: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to keep an enclosure holding two Great Pyrenees in good repair to protect them from injury, failing to provide two German shepherds with adequate shelter from the elements, and failing to provide seven dogs with bedding. At the time of inspection, the ambient temperature was 20 degrees Fahrenheit with overnight temperatures in the single digits and wind chills as low as -7 degrees. In addition, Laughing Valley was cited for failing to provide two rabbits with adequate shelter. They were kept outdoors with one nest box, which had no bedding and wasn’t large enough for both rabbits to take shelter.

January 5, 2012: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to a reindeer who was lying down and had rapid, shallow breathing and mucus streaming from her nose and to

another reindeer who had a hunched back and stiff gait and failing to provide potable water to several animals. In one case, the only water source for 25 animals was frozen solid and covered with excreta and soiled bedding. Another 21 animals had as their only water source a water receptacle with an excessive amount of algal growth.

Laughing Valley was also cited for failing to keep housing in several enclosures structurally sound and in good repair to protect animals from injury and contain the animals and failing to have records available for USDA officials to review.

September 26, 2011: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide potable water to three rabbits. The water receptacles had a buildup of dirt and a pinkish debris on the inside, and the licensee stated that the water came from a tank that collected runoff from the roof of the house. The facility was also cited for failing to provide structurally sound housing kept in good repair to protect the animals from injury and to contain the animals and failing to have records available for review.

August 9, 2011: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to a llama who had excessively long hooves and failing to provide a primary enclosure to Forest, a dog who was being contained solely by tethering, which is a prohibited means of primary enclosure, according to a previous inspection. (See May 28, 2011.) Tethering is prohibited as a means of primary enclosure because the dogs are unable to move freely and escape the public during handling and because of possible injury to the dogs. The facility was also cited for failing to provide structurally sound housing kept in good repair to protect the animals from injury and to contain the animals, failing to provide a llama and a donkey with adequate shelter from direct sunlight, and failing to provide

shelter from inclement weather to a llama and a donkey.

June 28, 2011: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide 28 animals with structurally sound housing kept in good repair to protect the animals from injury and to contain the animals.

June 22, 2011: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process.

May 31, 2011: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to three reindeer who had excessively long hooves that impacted their ability to walk.

May 28, 2011: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have an appropriate primary enclosure for Forest and Callie, two dogs who were tethered in a petting zoo exhibition. Tethering is prohibited as a means of primary enclosure because the dogs are unable to move freely and escape the public during handling and because of possible injury to the dogs.

February 28, 2011: The USDA cited Laughing Valley Ranch for failing to have a responsible adult available for the inspection process.