

October 1, 2019

USDA/APHIS/Animal Care

Via e-mail: [Animalcare@usda.gov](mailto:Animalcare@usda.gov)

Re: Request for Investigation of Apparent Animal Welfare Act Violations at Space Wild Animal Farm, Inc. (License No. 22-C-0018)

Dear USDA Animal Care:

I am writing on behalf of PETA to request that the USDA promptly investigate Space Wild Animal Farm, Inc., dba "Space Farms Zoo and Museum" ("Space Farms"; license number 22-C-0018), for endangering a one day old cougar cub, in violation of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

On September 25, Steve Andrews of WSUS radio posted on [their website](#) that Space Farms employee, Lori Space Day, transported a one-day old cougar in a cardboard box in the front seat of her car. According to the report, Steve Andrews saw the cub when Day stopped at the Subaru World of Newton on Saturday with the infant cougar. (*See* also Exhibit 1.)

Removing cubs from their mothers prematurely and subjecting them to excessive handling and exposure to the public can cause young cubs without fully developed immune systems to become injured, sick, or highly stressed—and can even result in their deaths.<sup>1</sup> Space Farm's conduct of removing a cub from her mother and exposing her to the public one day after birth appears to violate 9 C.F.R. § 2.131(b)(1) and (c)(3), which require that "[h]andling of all animals shall be done as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that does not cause trauma ... behavioral stress, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort" and that "[y]oung or immature animals shall not be exposed to rough or excessive public handling or exhibited for periods of time which would be detrimental to their health or well-being."

The USDA's official policy statement regarding neonatal nondomestic cat cubs 4 weeks old or younger states that:

Until these animals can thermoregulate and are immunocompetent, they should be housed in the controlled environment of a heated, clean, and sheltered enclosure (such as a nursery), or in a clean, sheltered enclosure with the mother and any healthy siblings.<sup>2</sup>

The USDA has previously acknowledged the risks inherent in prematurely removing cubs from their mothers and exposing them to the public:

<sup>1</sup> The USDA has determined that infant large cats who are less than approximately 8 weeks old should not be subjected to excessive handling because their immune systems have not "developed sufficiently to protect them from most communicable diseases." USDA, [Big Cat Question and Answer](#).

<sup>2</sup> See USDA, ["Handling and Husbandry of Neonatal Nondomestic Cats,"](#) March 2016.

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THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
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FOUNDATION

Washington, D.C.  
1536 16th St. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-483-PETA

Los Angeles  
2154 W. Sunset Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90026  
323-644-PETA

Norfolk  
501 Front St.  
Norfolk, VA 23510  
757-622-PETA

Berkeley  
2855 Telegraph Ave.  
Ste. 301  
Berkeley, CA 94705  
510-763-PETA

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Animals this young [19 days old] in the absence of their parents are not able to adequately thermoregulate and exposure to temperatures which may be comfortable for adults may still be detrimental to the health of young cubs. Exposure to an excessive number of people and other animals at this young age poses a disease risk to the cub. Even indirect exposure via the licensee who has contact with the members of the public and other animals can pose a similar risk to the cub of this age.<sup>3</sup>

Please investigate Space Farms and ensure that the facility has provided all animals with adequate veterinary care, shelter, space, food, and water and that the animals are otherwise handled in accordance with the AWA. Please also hold Space Farms fully accountable for all violations that you discover during your investigation.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please inform me of the complaint number that your agency assigns to this correspondence.

Very truly yours,



Rebecca Smudzinski, M.A.  
Wildlife Specialist, Captive Animal Law Enforcement

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<sup>3</sup> See USDA Inspection Report, Joe Schreibvogel, License No. 73-C-0139, Aug. 5, 2015. See also USDA Inspection Report, Nick Sculac, License No. 84-C-0069, May 23, 2013; USDA Inspection Report, Steven Higgs, License No. 92-C-0159, May 23, 2016; and USDA Inspection Report, Stearns Zoological Rescue and Rehab, License No. 58-C0883, February 16, 2017.