

Debbie Dolittle's Animal Experience

120 138th St. S. Ste. B, Tacoma, WA 98444

Debbie Dolittle's Animal Experience (also known as Debbie Dolittle's Indoor Petting Zoo and formerly known as Jozee Rooz Indoor Petting Zoo and City Goat Farm & Zoo Inc.) has failed to meet minimum 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 the facility for failing to demonstrate adequate experience and knowledge of the species it maintains, failing to handle animals in a manner that minimized the risk of injury to the animals and the public, failing to maintain structurally sound enclosures in good repair to protect animals from injury, and failing to maintain up-to-date records on the animals in its care. In May 2019, a fennec fox sustained a compound leg fracture because a metal ramp was not adequately secured in her enclosure. In October 2019, a young sloth died after falling from a climbing structure. On multiple occasions, visitors have been allowed to interact with animals without restraints or barriers, and as a result, visitors have reportedly been bitten by a capybara, otters, and a sloth. On July 27, 2021, the USDA fined the facility \$7,500 for multiple alleged violations that occurred between March 2019 and February 2020. Contact PETA for documentation.

July 27, 2021: The USDA fined Debbie Dolittle's a penalty of \$7,500 for seven alleged violations of the AWA that occurred between March 2019 and February 2020.

The alleged violations are as follows (see specific dates below for more details).

- March 19, 2019: Failing to provide acquisition and disposition records that fully and correctly covered all animals
- June 17, 2019: Failing to provide a structurally sound enclosure for a fennec fox that led to a compound leg fracture that was "so severe" the leg had to be amputated
- July 2, 2019: Failing to demonstrate adequate experience and knowledge of the species maintained at the facility following the death of a young tamandua, who died three weeks after arriving at the facility
- August 27, 2019: Failing to handle animals during public exhibition in a manner that minimized risk of harm to the animals and the public following two incidents in which guests were injured by otters at the facility
- December 10, 2019: Failing to demonstrate adequate experience and knowledge of the species maintained at the facility following the death of a young sloth, whose necropsy results "were found to be consistent with mishandling, neglect and ignorance of animal care"
- December 10, 2019: Failing to handle animals during public exhibition in a way that minimized risk of harm to the animals and the public following an incident in which a guest was bitten by a capybara
- April 22, 2019–February 17, 2020: Failing to handle animals during public exhibition in a way that minimized risk of harm to the animals and the public (During this time frame, approximately 79 guests "were injured in varying degrees of seriousness during interactions with animals.")

December 10, 2019: The USDA issued Debbie Dolittle's a critical, repeat citation for

Debbie Dolittle's Animal Experience

failing to demonstrate adequate experience and knowledge of the species it maintains. A young female sloth named Malia died on October 26, 2019, after she reportedly fell from a climbing structure, became unresponsive, and was euthanized. Malia's necropsy results showed blunt force trauma to the head, severe emaciation, indications of chronic stress, and older bruising to the body wall that was not related to her fall. According to the inspection report, the results were consistent with mishandling, neglect, and ignorance of animal care. The licensee's lack of knowledge of the species led to the deteriorating health of the sloth, which may have ultimately contributed to her death.

Debbie Dolittle's was also issued a repeat citation for failing to handle animals in a manner that minimized the risk of injury to the animals and the public. The facility was allowing the public to interact with the animals without a barrier or restraint, and a visitor was reportedly bitten on the arm while petting a capybara. The visitor sought medical treatment for the bite, and the incident was reported to local animal control by the medical facility that treated the visitor. The licensee stated that they were unaware that a visitor had been bitten.

August 27, 2019: The USDA cited Debbie Dolittle's for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized the risk of injury to the animals and the public. The facility was allowing the public to interact with the Asian small-clawed otters and the sloths, with no restraints on the animals nor a barrier between the animals and the public. During these interactions, the licensee documented two incidents in which otters bit visitors, and at least one visitor was bitten by a sloth. Otters can be aggressive, have strong teeth and a powerful bite, and have the potential to cause serious injury to a human. Sloths can also bite and have sharp, hard front teeth. The facility was also cited for failing to

maintain an effective fly control program. Numerous flies were noted in the facility, on the food, and on the animals. They can transmit disease and be irritating to animals.

July 24, 2019: The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) issued Debbie Dolittle's a notice of correction for failing to meet state animal health entry requirements for exotic animals. On June 25, 2019, the WSDA received certificates of veterinary inspection from Texas that showed that animals transported from Texas to the Washington facility did not meet health entry requirements: They had no entry permit and had not undergone the required testing. A hold order was put in place (see the June 25, 2019, entry) requiring that a warthog be tested for brucellosis and a giraffe be tested for brucellosis and tuberculosis. The notice of correction warned that entry requirements must be met prior to entry into Washington state and that failure to comply with state laws and rules may result in further enforcement that may include civil penalties (\$1,000).

July 2, 2019: The USDA issued Debbie Dolittle's a critical citation for failing to demonstrate adequate experience and knowledge of the species it maintains. A young male tamandua was found dead on June 27, 2019, three weeks after arriving at the facility. He had not been quarantined or acclimated to his new environment but was housed in a round enclosure in a central location in the busiest area of the petting zoo. He experienced some weight loss, but there were no written records to document the actual bodyweight of the animal or the progression of his weight loss, and he was never examined by a veterinarian.

June 25, 2019: The WSDA issued Debbie Dolittle's a hold order instructing the owner to quarantine a giraffe, a warthog, and a binturong, who were transported to the

Debbie Dolittle's Animal Experience

Washington facility from Texas without meeting health entry requirements (see the July 24, 2019, entry), until proper infectious disease testing was conducted.

June 17, 2019: The USDA issued Debbie Dolittle's a critical citation for failing to maintain structurally sound enclosures in good repair to protect animals from injury. On May 10, 2019, a female fennec fox named Peggy sustained a compound leg fracture from a metal ramp that was not adequately secured in the multilevel enclosure that she shared with another fennec fox.

March 19, 2019: The USDA issued Debbie Dolittle's a repeat citation for failing to have acquisition and disposition information available for all animals. The USDA also documented multiple "Teachable Moments," instructing Debbie Dolittle's to have additional attendants present during periods of public contact with animals, to make sure that food stored in the refrigerator is covered or placed in a container or plastic bag to prevent deterioration or molding, and to label frozen food with the date prepared and date thawed.

June 11, 2018: The USDA issued Debbie Dolittle's a repeat citation for failing to have acquisition records available, in this case for a shrew. Records provide traceability of animals, which can help protect their welfare.

June 26, 2017: The USDA issued Debbie Dolittle's a citation for failing to maintain the facilities in good repair to protect animals from injury. A 12-foot section of enclosure fencing had sharp wire ends protruding into the enclosure that could injure the animals, and some enclosure fencing had electric wire hanging loosely along the top of the fence and in the inner enclosure that animals could potentially become entangled in, causing injury. The facility was also cited

for failing to maintain a structurally sound perimeter fence in good repair. The perimeter fence in a corner of the property lacked structural stability and was easily moved when pressure was applied.

May 25, 2017: The USDA issued Debbie Dolittle's citations for failing to provide four camels with a shelter of sufficient size to protect all four of them from inclement weather and for failing to provide camels with shelter from the sunlight while they were being used for rides. Prolonged exposure to sunlight could cause the camels discomfort or to become overheated.

May 3, 2017: The USDA issued Debbie Dolittle's citations for failing to maintain an updated program of veterinary care that included the kangaroo, prairie dog, fennec fox, and pigs and for failing to have acquisition information on three reindeer or up-to-date records on the kangaroo, prairie dog, fennec fox, and mongoose.