

# Spring River Park & Zoo

1306 E. College Blvd., Roswell, NM 88201

Spring River Park & Zoo has failed to meet minimum standards for the care of animals used in exhibition as established by the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has repeatedly cited this facility for numerous issues, including failing to repair damaged coating in the enclosures, failing to fix fences that could injure the animals or could allow for unauthorized people to come into contact with them, failing to provide adequate veterinary care, failing to maintain structurally sound enclosures that prevent animals from escaping, failing to retain required documentation, and failing to have a sufficient number of employees with animal husbandry knowledge. On February 15, 2023, the USDA fined the facility \$4,500 for multiple alleged violations that occurred between October 2020 and December 2022.

Contact PETA for documentation.

**February 15, 2023:** The USDA issued Spring River a \$4,500 penalty for six alleged violations that had occurred between October 2020 and December 2022.

- **October 11, 2020:** Failing to maintain adequate enclosures, resulting in a beaver's escape
- **July 8, 2021:** Failing to maintain adequate enclosures, resulting in a black bear's escape
- **July 15, 2021:** Failing to conduct daily observations of a longhorn steer with overgrown hooves and apparent

- decreased muscle volume
- **July 23, 2021:** Failing to provide adequate veterinary care for a longhorn steer who appeared thin and had overgrown hooves
- **April 28, 2022:** Failing to maintain an enclosure to protect animals from injury, resulting in an elk's euthanasia after she fractured her leg
- **December 29, 2022:** Failing to have a perimeter fence that would protect animals from injury, resulting in an attack by stray dogs that killed four animals

**December 28, 2022:** Barbie, Bugsy, Vinny, and Cash, three aoudads and a wallaby, were attacked and killed after a pack of dogs dug under a newly erected perimeter fence and gained entry to Spring River.

**July 28, 2022:** The USDA issued a critical repeat citation to Spring River for failing to maintain the elk enclosure in good repair, resulting in the injury and subsequent euthanasia of Patty, a female elk. A section of panel was missing from the pen that she was being transferred to. She followed another elk through the opening created by the missing panel and ensnared her hind leg. When she jerked her leg free, her left cannon bone was irreparably shattered. Patty was euthanized on site by a veterinarian.

**February 24, 2022:** The USDA cited Spring River for failing to keep food preparation and storage areas clean and sanitary. The floors of the commissary building were dirty, with heavy accumulations of brown and black dirt and debris in some areas; the sink and metal shelving used to prepare and store food were covered with layers of dust and dirt; food containers on the shelves were dusty; the chest freezer containing frozen meat had loose dirt and dirty items on top of it; a large commercial refrigerator had rusted metal shelving that couldn't be

sanitized properly; and another refrigerator containing fresh meat and produce had thick, brownish-pink fluid that had pooled and dried in the drawers and on the shelves, walls, and floor.

**November 29, 2021:** The USDA cited Spring River for failing to keep the rear portions of the zoo free of rubble, junk, and overgrown weeds. Large piles of discarded materials, a dilapidated vehicle, a trailer, disassembled playground equipment, and very tall, dense vegetation prevented assessment of the perimeter fence's integrity and offered breeding and living areas for rodents and other "pests".

Spring River was also cited for failing to have an effective perimeter fence. The fence enclosing the facility was less than 8 feet high for nearly the entire perimeter, and in some places, it was less than 6 feet high. Sections of the fence were in such poor repair that it was insufficient as a secondary containment system for the animals housed at the facility and as a barrier to prevent other animals and unauthorized persons from entering. Trees had grown through the fence in numerous places, barbed wire strands were detached or missing from the top, and gaps were found in several places.

**July 23, 2021:** The USDA issued Spring River a direct repeat citation for failing to provide the equipment necessary to offer adequate veterinary care to Geronimo, a longhorn steer. The focused inspection was arranged to assess Geronimo's physical condition following a previous inspection (See the July 15, 2021, entry below). There was still no chute available, and Geronimo was found to be in the same condition as noted previously. He stumbled slightly when walking and had overgrown hooves, prominent depressions around the tailhead, a visible backbone, and muscle depletion in his hindquarters. It was noted that the delay in care could contribute to the worsening

health and well-being of the animal.

**July 15, 2021:** The USDA cited Spring River for failing to provide the necessary equipment requested by a veterinarian and required to offer adequate veterinary care to a longhorn steer named Geronimo. During inspection, the USDA agent noted that Geronimo had overgrown, chipped, and curling hooves and that he often dragged the tips of his hooves on the ground, causing him to have an intermittent stumble when walking. He also had muscle depletion and loose skin on his chest, prominent depressions around the tailhead, a visible backbone, and muscle depletion in his hindquarters. The attending veterinarian requested that the facility provide a chute onsite to allow proper veterinary care without anesthesia, but there was no chute during the time of inspection.

The USDA also cited Spring River for failing to maintain acquisition records for two black bears and a mountain lion who had been transferred from the City of Alamogordo. The USDA further cited the facility for failing to have written documentation of an exercise plan for one wolf-dog hybrid and for failing to have written documentation of the environmental enrichment plan for the psychological well-being of three lemurs.

The USDA issued Spring River a critical citation for failing to maintain the structural integrity of multiple enclosures, resulting in the escape of a bear and a beaver from their enclosures. On July 7, 2021, a female black bear named Winnie who was being held at the facility temporarily escaped her enclosure. Winnie escaped by pulling a layer of chain link material that was used as a roof off her enclosure. The opening was large enough for her to escape onto the top of the enclosure. On October 10, 2020, a beaver named Timber escaped from a temporary enclosure that was created for cranes and did not have digging barriers in

place. Timber was able to dig under three different fences to escape Spring River. He was unable to be recovered. The USDA inspector also found a roughly 15-foot section of chain link fencing in the elk and deer holding area that was loose and curling upward and inward, creating an approximately 8-to-10-inch gap underneath and causing the fencing material to protrude into the enclosure by several inches. The inspector noted that protruding materials, loose fences, and gaps in fencing “pose a trip and/or entrapment hazard for the animals.”

**May 16, 2017:** The USDA cited Spring River for failing to provide a barrier fence between the enclosure housing three muntjacs and the general viewing public. The facility was also cited for repeat violations for failing to fix a 3- to 4-foot gap in its perimeter fence and failing to fix stucco coating in the enclosures housing the wolves and coyotes, which exposed underlying concrete and could potentially allow the animals to ingest the coating.

**February 21, 2017:** The USDA cited Spring River for failing to have documentation of the environmental enhancement plan for three lemurs. It was also cited for a repeat violation for failing to have a sufficient number of trained zookeepers with experience in proper animal husbandry. The facility was also cited for multiple repeat violations for failing to maintain the following structures in good repair: an eroded concrete surface in the enclosure housing bears that exposed underlying chipped and broken concrete, a chain-link fence that was inadequate to contain the large animals being housed inside it, a chain-link fence that had broken and sharp points that could injure the bison being held inside it, an off-exhibit building that held two bobcats and two coatimundis that was “very rusted” and extremely hard to clean and sanitize because of its set-up, and a deteriorating

storage building that was filled with construction debris and other materials.

**December 13, 2016:** The USDA cited Spring River for failing to have a safe and effective program for the control of rodents. Inspectors noted rodent fecal material and a hole created by rodents inside the building where the lemurs were housed. There were pieces of insulation, banana peels, and rodent feces under the food bowl. The facility was also cited for failing to have a sufficient number of trained zookeepers with experience in proper husbandry and care of nonhuman primates.

The USDA also cited the facility for multiple repeat violations for failing to maintain the following structures in good repair: exposed underlying concrete in the enclosure holding the bears, which could allow them to ingest the stucco coating; a fence around the exhibit holding the beaver, which contained approximately 4-inch gaps where the animal could become trapped or injured; and a fence surrounding the facility, which had an 8-inch gap and a loose gate and couldn’t function as a secondary containment system or as a means to prevent unauthorized people from having contact with the animals.

**July 21, 2016:** The USDA cited Spring River for failing to repair missing stucco coating in the area housing the bears. The underlying concrete was exposed, and the bears could ingest pieces of the coating.

**September 15, 2015:** The USDA cited Spring River for failing to secure metal panels on a hay-storage building in a way that adequately protected food from deteriorating or becoming moldy or contaminated. The facility was also cited for failing to fix a gap in its perimeter fence.

**April 7, 2014:** The USDA cited Spring River for failing to contain animals safely.

Because of employee inattention, a moat in an enclosure housing bears was overfilled, raising the water level high enough that a bear cub was able to swim across to the wire fence at the front of the exhibit and climb over it. The animal was then able to get on a cinder block wall separating the enclosure housing the bears from the one confining the cougars, walk along the wall, and gain access to the roof area over the bear enclosure.

**March 24, 2014:** The USDA cited Spring River for failing to repair broken stucco that had fallen from the interior walls onto the floor of the enclosure holding two bear cubs. The facility was also cited for having a 2.5-foot-long crack and splintered trim boards in the shelter holding the deer.

**September 17, 2013:** The USDA cited Spring River for failing to repair or replace fencing that was curling upward inside the pen that housed four deer.