

December 4, 2020

USDA/APHIS/Animal Care
Via e-mail: Animalcare@usda.gov

Re: Request for Investigation of Apparent Animal Welfare Act Violations by
Larry Wallach (License No. 21-C-0069)

Dear USDA Animal Care:

I am writing on behalf of PETA to request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture investigate Larry Wallach (license no. 21-C-0069) for the following apparent Animal Welfare Act (AWA) violations—detailed in the attached appendix—which were posted live and publically on Larry Wallach's [Facebook page](#) between November 2 and 26).

- A young tiger, named Sheba was limping and may not be receiving appropriate veterinary care. (See Video 1, Video 2, Video 3, Video 4, Video 5, Video 6, Video 7, Video 8 and Video 9.)
- Sheba does not appear to be receiving an appropriate diet and may be suffering from metabolic bone disease. (See Video 1, Video 2, Video 3, Video 4, Video 5, Video 6, Video 7, Video 8, and Video 9.)
- Larry Wallach used physical punishment in the form of an electric prod to handle Sheba. (See Video 1, Video 2, Video 3, Video 5, and Video 9.)
- Larry Wallach was not safely or humanely handling Sheba. (See Video 1, Video 2, Video 3, Video 4, Video 5, Video 9, Video 10, and Video 11.)
- Sheba was confined to an enclosure that was in disrepair and posed an injury risk. (See Video 5, Video 6, Video 7, Video 8, Video 9, and Video 11.)

Please ensure that all animals owned or in temporary custody of Larry Wallach are being provided with adequate veterinary care, space, shelter, food, and water and are otherwise handled in accordance with the AWA. Please also hold Larry Wallach fully accountable for all violations that you discover during your inspection.

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.
Senior Captive Wildlife Specialist, Captive Animal Law Enforcement

cc: Laurie Gage, D.V.M., Big-Cat and Marine Mammal Specialist

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS
FOUNDATION

Washington
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

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- PETA U.S.
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- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

Appendix

a. A Young Tiger Was Limping and May Not Be Receiving Appropriate Veterinary Care or Nutrition

On November 4, a veterinarian visited Wallach's home to take radiographs of the front left limb of a young tiger named Sheba—reportedly between 17-18 weeks old—because she had been limping. Wallach and others struggled to handle and position Sheba appropriately and humanely to enable the veterinarian to obtain radiographs and it is clear that Sheba was not sedated. (*See Video 1.*) Wildlife veterinarian Dr. Monica Bando opined that there are multiple options for safely sedating wild animals for an examination and radiographs and the benefits of doing so include reducing the stress of handling and reducing the risk of injury to animals and handlers/people. In addition, sedation in this case would have facilitated a more thorough physical examination, palpation of her limb and paw, assessment of stability of the fractured metacarpal, blood sampling to assess baseline health status, and more efficient and better quality radiographs by allowing more appropriate positioning by minimizing movement artefact, and reducing x-ray exposure of the cub and people by not having to manually restrain her, or retake radiographs that are of poor quality or not diagnostic. There is also no indication that protective lead gowns, gloves, or thyroid shields were worn by anyone when the radiographs were obtained in this private home, which poses a public safety hazard. According to Dr. Bando, baseline bloodwork is also important when prescribing non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication such as meloxicam, that can affect the kidneys and is the medication the veterinarian prescribes for Sheba.

The veterinarian reviewing the x-rays determined that Sheba had a metacarpal fracture (a broken toe) and recommended a conservative approach of rest and inactivity, in addition to the anti-inflammatory medication. (*See Video 2.*) Dr. Bando opined that metabolic bone disease (MBD) is common in privately owned big cat cubs due to inappropriate nutrition and metacarpal fractures are one indication that Sheba may not be receiving an appropriate diet. Due to the high prevalence of MBD in large cat cubs kept in human homes, when cubs present for lameness and a fracture is confirmed, it is best practice to screen the rest of her paws, long bones, and spine for any other additional fractures that could be indicative of MBD. It is also imperative to review the entire diet being provided to ensure it is nutritionally balanced as cats have specific nutrient requirements. Sheba is fed liquid from a bottle multiple times throughout these videos (*see Video 3 and Video 4*) and on November 3, Wallach shows some of the solid food he feeds her, which includes boneless meat from a grocery store. (*See Video 3 at 7:28.*) According to Dr. Bando, this home-made diet with no bones is not appropriate and will cause metabolic bone disease unless supplemented with an appropriate quantity and quality of calcium, in addition to vitamin D, which is essential to facilitate calcium absorption. In addition, Wallach stimulated Sheba to defecate when giving her a bath. (*See Video 3 at 39:37 – 41:40.*) Dr. Bando opined that by this age she should not need to be stimulated to defecate and if she is having trouble defecating on her own this may also be an indication that she is not being fed an adequate diet.

Furthermore, Dr. Bando opined that while an option for the treatment of a single metacarpal fracture includes conservative rest and minimal activity to let the fracture heal on its own, this approach requires repeat radiographs to closely monitor and ensure appropriate healing, and without further screening, one cannot rule out additional potential lesions associated with substandard care. On November 20, Wallach stated that Sheba is completely healed but she can still be seen favoring that leg on November 20, 21, and 22, while she is running around playing with a domestic dog named Rocket. (*See Video 5 at 1:19,*

Video 6, Video 7, Video 8, and Video 9.) According to Dr Bando, it appears she is still healing and follow up radiographs are necessary to monitor and assess healing.

The apparent lack of an appropriate and thorough physical examination, diagnostics, and follow up care for Sheba's injury, the lack of protective equipment for taking radiographs, and the apparent lack of an appropriate diet, indicates that Sheba may not be receiving appropriate veterinary care and nutrition. Please inspect this tiger and her veterinary records, and ensure that she is receiving adequate veterinary care from a veterinarian who is trained and qualified for the species pursuant to 9 C.F.R. § 2.40. Please also ensure that she is receiving a nutritionally balanced diet that is species and age appropriate pursuant to 9 C.F.R. § 3.129(a), which requires that "[f]ood shall be wholesome, palatable, and free from contamination and of sufficient quantity and nutritive value to maintain all animals in good health."

b. Larry Wallach Used Physical Punishment On a Young Tiger

During the veterinary visit, Sheba is clearly not used to being handled and exhibits behaviors indicative of stress, making multiple attempts to avoid handling and to retreat but is unable to do so. While attempting to position Sheba over or next to the plate to take the radiographs, Wallach used an electric prod to shock Sheba. In Video 1, the electric prod is visible at 1:34 and again at 4:44 - 4:54 when Wallach tries to hide it behind his back. The use of the electric prod can be heard at 1:52 and 2:23. At 3:50, Wallach tells the person holding the camera to point the camera upwards and when the camera pans back down at 3:59, Wallach can be seen shocking Sheba with the electric prod at the very point where she is lying calmly with her left front limb on the plate, which only forces her to move away from the plate and would clearly create confusion as to what behavior is sought. In the second video—taken on November 4 after they have completed the radiographs—the electric prod can be seen sitting out on the table near the veterinarian. (*See* Video 2 at 6:14 and 7:23.)

The use of the electric prod does not appear to be an isolated incident. On November 3, Sheba is walking around Wallach's private residence on a lead with an overly tight collar and playing with Rocket. Wallach threatens the dog and tiger with the electric prod, the sound of which can be heard off camera multiple times, and he says "you guys like the noise, stay down." (*See* Video 3 at 30:27 – 31:40.) On November 20, Wallach was in an outdoor enclosure with Sheba and Rocket who are playing together and the electric prod is used again as a threat. (*See* Video 5 at 2:17 and 2:41 when the sound of the electric prod can be heard and at 3:17 when it is visible in Wallach's hand and he tries to hide it behind his back.) On November 22, Wallach was in the enclosure with Sheba and another unidentified person. The electric prod was seen and heard multiple times when Sheba came toward the other person, apparently as a means to restrict Sheba from exhibiting normal young tiger play behaviors. (*See* Video 9 at 3:20-3:27, 3:45, 3:50, 3:56, 10:50, and 13:32.)

As further explained above, multiple options exist to take radiographs of a wild animal that do not include physical abuse. Furthermore, Wallach clearly uses this same means of abuse at other times, as seen in multiple videos when he threatens the tiger and dog with the noise of the electric prod. Using an electric prod to handle an animal is a clear violation of 9 C.F.R. § 2.131(b)(2)(i), which states that "[p]hysical abuse shall not be used to train, work, or otherwise handle animals."

There is no evidence in any of this footage indicating that Wallach has the appropriate knowledge or experience in how to safely and humanely handle this tiger in a manner that minimizes stress or that does not cause physical or psychological harm. Wallach and the others around him are almost constantly

yelling at this tiger for exhibiting normal cub behavior, and Wallach can be seen yanking Sheba around by the leash and collar, pushing and slapping her, and threatening her with the sound of the electric prod. On November 3, Wallach confined Sheba to a cramped crate and it is unclear how much time she spends in there (*see* Video 3 at 1:07:35). On November 2-4, Wallach keeps her on a short lead that physically restricts her movements. While restricting her activity would be important due to her injury, restraining an injured tiger in this manner as she attempts to maneuver around a human house and furniture only causes further stress and potential harm. (*See* Video 4 at 5:50 – 6:20 when Sheba bites at Wallach and he pushes her back and pins her head with his feet, Video 3 at 38:15 when they drag her down the hall to put her in a bath, Video 3 at 56:10 when she attempts to climb on a glass coffee table and slides off, Video 3 at 58:10 when they tie her leash to a railing, Video 3 at 52:55 when hair loss can be seen under the tight collar, and Video 10 when Wallach brings her to another private residence and introduces her to a wolf). In addition, Wallach lifts Sheba into the bathtub by holding onto her collar and the base of her tail (*see* Video 3 at 38:45) and pulls her tail when she is in a crate eating food (*see* Video 11 at 3:12.) Dr. Bando opined that this is inappropriate and inhumane handling that could cause a fracture and soft tissue injury, which is particularly concerning if she is not receiving an appropriate diet and has MBD.

The inappropriate handling of this tiger by Wallach and others, including physical and verbal punishment for expressing normal and natural young tiger behaviors, appears to violate 9 C.F.R. § 2.131 (b)(1), which requires that "[h]andling of all animals shall be done as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that does not cause trauma, overheating, excessive cooling, behavioral stress, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort." Please also ensure that Wallach has the appropriate knowledge and experience to be handling this species as required by 9 C.F.R. § 2.131(a), which requires that "[a]ll licensees who maintain wild or exotic animals must demonstrate adequate experience and knowledge of the species they maintain."

c. The Tiger's Enclosure Was In Disrepair and Posed an Injury Hazard

On November 20-26, Sheba was confined to an enclosure that is on the back deck of what appears to be Wallach's private home. Throughout the videos, Sheba and Rocket were seen playing in the enclosure together, which has a wooden floor with multiple large holes and splintered wood, as well as a piece of metal tacked to the floor with sharp edges, posing an injury risk to these animals and especially Sheba—who has already sustained an injury and appears to still be healing. (*See* Video 5, Video 6, Video 7, Video 8, Video 9, and Video 11.) While a small cushion and pine shavings were added to the enclosure on November 22, it clearly does not fix the multiple structural failures of this enclosure floor or prevent Sheba or Rocket from stepping into a hole that is now less obvious because of all the shavings.

Failure to provide a safe enclosure to prevent injury to Sheba appears to violate 9 C.F.R. § 3.125(a), which requires that the "facility must be constructed of such material and of such strength as appropriate for the animals involved. The indoor and outdoor housing facilities shall be structurally sound and shall be maintained in good repair to protect the animals from injury and to contain the animals."