

November 9, 2011

Dr. Elizabeth Goldentyer
 USDA/APHIS/AC
 920 Main Campus Dr., Ste. 200
 Raleigh, NC 27606-5210

Via e-mail: betty.j.goldentyer@usda.gov

Dear Dr. Goldentyer:

This is an official request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) formally investigate the death of two giraffes and approximately three dogs, four cats, and 15 parrots under the care of Burton Sipp (dba "Animal Kingdom Zoo" and also known as "Bridget's Animal Kingdom"; license # 22-C-0094). On October 30, 2011, a fire broke out at the facility—the second fire at this site in approximately six months, both times while [Sipp was out of state](#)—and a giraffe and her 3-week-old calf were crushed to death when a wall collapsed on them while the other animals surely suffered equally tragic deaths.

Reports indicate that on the evening of October 30, a fire broke out after a Halloween event hosted by the facility. A female giraffe and her 3-week-old calf were locked in a building when [a wall fell on them](#), apparently killing the mother instantly, while her calf did not survive the night. [Three dogs and four cats](#), as well as up to [15 parrots](#), also died that evening while Burton Sipp was apparently out of town. In April 2011, another fire at this site—[also while Sipp was out of town](#)—resulted in the death of his wife, Bridget Sipp.

Section 3.132 of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) regulations provides: "A sufficient number of adequately trained employees shall be utilized to maintain the professionally acceptable level of husbandry practices Such practices shall be under a supervisor who has a background in animal care." Twice now, while Sipp has been out of town, even though supervisors should be on site to handle any unforeseen events, lethal fires have broken out at his facility. We are concerned that—especially if staff were on site hosting a party—there were not enough employees present to be adequately prepared to handle such an emergency situation, as demonstrated by the fact that the door to the giraffe barn was apparently still locked when emergency personnel arrived.

Because a wall collapsed and fell onto two giraffes, resulting in their deaths, we also urge the USDA to investigate whether or not Sipp maintained the structural integrity of the building in which the giraffes were locked and to ensure that they were in good repair in accordance with § 3.125(a). In regard to the cats and dogs who perished in this disaster, we ask your agency to also determine whether or not the structural integrity of their housing area was adequately constructed, as

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required by § 3.1(a), and whether the area was "neat and free of clutter," so as to prevent the rapid spread of the fire and as required by § 3.1(b).

Although the USDA has not yet developed specific standards for birds, these warm-blooded animals used for exhibit are covered by the plain language of the AWA and the Subpart F regulations. Accordingly, if the 15 parrots who also perished in the fire were used for exhibition, we urge the USDA to fully investigate the conditions surrounding their deaths as well.

Alarming, these concerns echo citations issued to Sipp on October 14, 2011—barely more than two weeks before the fire—and our suspicions have been raised as to whether or not he properly cleaned and renovated the facility as required by the USDA's inspection report before the incident. On its inspection report, USDA officials noted, among other violations, multiple citations for failure to have responsible, knowledgeable, and readily identifiable employees present; failure to maintain sanitary conditions; and failure to maintain the structural integrity of numerous enclosures, including the giraffe shelter building.

We urge the USDA to investigate the conditions surrounding this fire and, if this loss of life is found to have been preventable, to hold Sipp and Animal Kingdom Zoo responsible. Thank you for your time and prompt attention to this matter. Please inform me of the USDA's actions in this matter. I can be reached at 202-309-4697 or DelciannaW@peta.org.

Sincerely,



Delcianna Winders
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