

January 9, 2017

Robert Gibbens, D.V.M.  
Director, Animal Welfare Operations  
USDA/APHIS/AC Western Region

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]; [acwest@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:acwest@aphis.usda.gov)

Re: Request for Investigation of Apparent Animal Welfare Act Violations at  
Spring River Park & Zoo (License No. 85-C-0005)

Dear Dr. Gibbens:

I am writing on behalf of PETA to request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) investigate the City of Roswell, New Mexico, dba "Spring River Park & Zoo" (license no. 85-C-0005), regarding an obese mountain lion confined to a cramped concrete pit, in apparent violation of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

A recent photograph of an obese mountain lion was posted on Spring River Park & Zoo's Facebook page on December 24, 2016. (*See photo.*) According to wildlife veterinarian Dr. Christine Capaldo, this animal's body condition is a 4 out of 5 on the Animal Welfare Inspection Guide's Body Condition Assessment Chart for lions (attached) and the animal should be evaluated by a veterinarian. Please inspect both mountain lions at the facility, as well as their veterinary records, and ensure that they're receiving adequate veterinary care pursuant to 9 C.F.R. § 2.40. Wildlife veterinarian Dr. Heather Rally opined that more often than not, overweight captive animals are an indication of poor diet rather than overconsumption. Please inspect the nutritive value of the food that these animals are provided, in accordance with 9 C.F.R. § 3.129(a), which requires that "[t]he food shall be wholesome, palatable, and free from contamination and of sufficient quantity and nutritive value to maintain all animals in good health. The diet shall be prepared with consideration for the age, species, condition, size, and type of the animal."

In addition, the mountain lions appear to be confined exclusively on concrete, which is very harmful to big cats, as it can cause health issues such as pressure sores and arthritis. The obese mountain lion's condition may also be a result of inadequate living conditions and a lack of opportunity to engage in meaningful exercise because of the cramped conditions of the pit, in apparent violation of 9 C.F.R. § 3.128, requiring that "[e]nclosures shall be constructed and maintained so as to provide sufficient space to allow each animal to make normal postural and social adjustments with adequate freedom of movement. Inadequate space may be indicated by evidence of malnutrition, poor condition, debility, stress, or abnormal behavior patterns," and *id.* § 2.131(d)(1), requiring that "[a]nimals shall be exhibited only for periods of time and under conditions consistent with their good health and well-being." The mountain lions and bears at Spring River Park & Zoo have been repeatedly observed and recorded engaging in stereotypical pacing behavior, indicative of severe mental distress and inadequate space.

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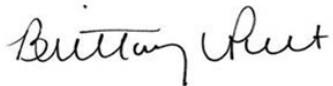
AFFILIATES:

- PETA U.S.
- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

Please examine the body conditions of other animals at Spring River Park & Zoo, their diets, and whether they're being provided with sufficient space to make normal postural and social adjustments. Also, please ensure that all animals at the facility are provided with clean water, adequate shelter, and care consistent with the mandates of the AWA and hold the facility fully accountable for any and 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brittany Peet".

Brittany Peet, Esq.  
Director, Captive Animal Law Enforcement





Photo: Obese mountain lion at Spring River Park & Zoo (December 24, 2016)