



October 25, 2011

The Honorable John Kasich
Governor, State of Ohio
Riffe Center, 30th Floor
77 S. High St.
Columbus, OH 43215-6117

4 pages via fax: 614-466-9354

Dear Gov. Kasich:

I am writing to urge you to immediately ban private ownership of wild animals in the state of Ohio. PETA has received countless complaints about wild animals in Ohio, and a review of recent documents reveals that numerous facilities are holding such animals in enclosures *inadequate to contain them*. Last year, a facility in Perrysburg, for example, was found to be housing more than a dozen dangerous wild animals, including adult lions and wolves, in enclosures that they could easily jump out of. And a facility in Massillon holds more than 100 animals, including tigers, lions, pumas, jaguars, bears, wolves, and a chimpanzee. Earlier this year, this facility was found to be keeping tigers in an enclosure that had no top and was not tall enough to keep the animals in. **These are just two of more than 10 highly concerning examples detailed in the attached appendix.**

While we appreciate your recent executive order regarding local enforcement of existing cruelty laws, enough human and animal blood has been shed in Ohio to underscore the urgency for not only stricter enforcement of existing laws but also immediate government intervention to prohibit private ownership of wild and exotic animals in the first place.

As you know, the tragedy that unfolded in Zanesville last week, in which dozens of wild animals were shot dead, occurred barely more than a year after 24-year-old Brent Kandra was killed after sustaining more than 650 wounds inflicted by a bear held captive on the Columbia Township property of Sam Mazzola. These incidents, while tragic, are not surprising given that Ohio is among the states with the highest number of injuries and deaths caused by captive wild and exotic animals, and they will continue to happen until the state takes appropriate preventive action.

The serious public safety threat and the tragic deaths of dozens of animals in Zanesville were entirely preventable, and you can see from the attached appendix that private owners of exotic animals in Ohio have demonstrated a persistent failure to sufficiently maintain enclosures for tigers, lions,

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bears, and other wild animals in order to prevent escapes. These are accidents waiting to happen. **Without immediate state action to ban private ownership of these animals once and for all, it is only a matter of when—not if—the next serious public safety and animal welfare emergency involving privately owned dangerous animals occurs.**

In addition to the serious public safety threat that currently exists in Ohio, wild animals held by private citizens are deprived of everything that is natural and important to them, and they suffer immensely from cruel confinement, inadequate veterinary care, and poor nutrition. Because of this, we request that any grandfather clause include a requirement that existing facilities satisfy the rigorous standards of the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries.

The need for decisive action to prevent further tragedies could not be more urgent. Please impose a ban in order to preserve public health and safety and to ensure that wild animals in your state will no longer be subjected to cruel exploitation by reckless individuals like Sam Mazzola and Terry Thompson who have no regard for animal welfare and will continue to jeopardize the lives and health of humans and animals alike unless and until a ban is imposed and enforced.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Delcianna Winders", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Delcianna Winders, Esq.
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Enclosure

Appendix

Selected Dangerous Wild-Animal Owners in Ohio

Across the state of Ohio, wild animals are being held in inadequate conditions—and in enclosures that are not even sufficient to contain them. This appendix highlights some examples of these animals and the threats that they pose to public safety, but it is just the tip of the iceberg. For each facility listed here, there are many more individuals holding wild animals in the Ohio. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspection reports and other sources documenting the conditions referenced below are available upon request.

1. Katherine Crabtree/Hilltop Farm (Lucasville)

Crabtree holds numerous wild and exotic animals, including lions, tigers, and bears, and has been cited repeatedly for improper housing of dangerous animals. Because enclosures were inadequate to separate dangerous animals, in 2009, a USDA inspector observed a tiger attack a bear, who later had to be euthanized. The inspector noted, "The bear was vocalizing by screaming with pain and . . . groaning was heard for a long time after it was freed. The left front leg was bleeding with white bone and tendons protruding from the skin from the elbo[w] down to the foot area."

2. Denise Flores/Tiger Paw Exotic Rescue Center (Ashland)

Flores holds numerous exotic cats and was cited by the USDA both this year and last year for failure to provide perimeter fencing of a sufficient height around enclosures for dangerous wild animals.

3. Angela Harter/Rescue One (Lancaster)

Harter holds numerous tigers and was cited by the USDA last year for inadequate tiger enclosures that had open holes and wide gaps that the inspector noted "may allow escape."

4. Kenneth Hetrick/Tiger Ridge Exotics (Perrysburg)

Hetrick keeps dozens of dangerous wild animals, including wolves and exotic cats. Last year, the USDA cited Hetrick for keeping lions and wolves in enclosures that were not tall enough to prevent escape and for failing to prevent public contact with the primary enclosures—and thus the animals. Inspectors also noted that the public barrier fencing surrounding the lion enclosure was broken.

5. Cyndi Huntsman/Stump Hill Farms (Massilon)

Huntsman holds more than 100 animals—including tigers, lions, pumas, jaguars, bears, wolves, and a chimpanzee—and was cited this year for keeping tigers in an enclosure that had no top and was not tall enough to keep the animals from escaping. Huntsman was also cited recently for allowing individuals who lack necessary expertise to handle dangerous animals during public exhibition.

6. Matt Joseph (Lisbon)

Joseph keeps numerous wild and exotic cats as "pets," including lions, ligers, tigers, and mountain lions. In 2009, federal inspectors found that Joseph failed to adequately maintain barriers between the public and large cats and that a child was able to reach her arm inside the mountain lion enclosure and had to be rushed to the hospital after being bitten.

7. Kord McGuire/Heaven's Corner for Endangered Animals (West Alexandria)

McGuire holds numerous exotic animals and was cited earlier this year by USDA inspectors who found that tigers could easily jump out of their open-top enclosures. The severity of the risk was compounded by the fact that McGuire failed to provide perimeter fencing and so had no secondary containment mechanism.

8. Robert Sawmiller/Wildlife on Wheels (Wapakoneta)

Since 2010, Sawmiller, who keeps numerous wild animals, including cougars, bears, and wolf hybrids, has been cited by the USDA for more than 20 pages' worth of serious safety and animal care violations. Among other grave violations, inspectors found that a bear could reach out of his enclosure and make contact with the public and that the enclosure for wolf hybrids was structurally compromised and not adequate to prevent an escape. Inspectors have reported that the facility is "not safe nor is it structurally sound."

9. Cyril Vierstra/Bethsaida Farms (Radcliff)

Vierstra, who holds numerous exotic cats, was cited by the USDA in October 2010 for housing tigers in an enclosure that was not of sufficient height to prevent an escape.

10. Doug Whitehouse/Noah's Lost Ark (Berlin Center)

Noah's Lost Ark houses dozens of exotic cats and other dangerous animals and was cited earlier this year for housing *at least 29 large felines* in open-top enclosures that were not sufficiently tall to prevent the cats from escaping.

11. Valley Exotics, LLC (Eaton)

This facility houses, exhibits, and offers public contact with multiple species of wild animals and was cited by the USDA last year for maintaining and exhibiting bears without adequate knowledge or experience and for having a dart gun but no medications to use with it, making restraint impossible.