

# T.I.G.E.R.S. (Bhagavan Antle)

851 Folly Ranch Ln., Myrtle Beach, SC 29588

**T.I.G.E.R.S. (The Institute of Greatly Endangered and Rare Species), aka “Myrtle Beach Safari,” operated by Bhagavan Antle (aka “Kevin Antle,” “Kevin Bhagavan,” “Mahamayavi Bhagavan Antle,” “Bhagavan Kevin Antle,” “Ghagavan Antle,” “Doc Antle,” and “Dr. Kevin Antle”), has failed to meet minimum standards for the care of animals used in exhibitions as established by the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has cited Antle for multiple violations, including failing to provide animals with adequate veterinary care, failing to have a program of veterinary care, failing to provide primates with heat, failing to keep enclosures in good repair, failing to provide sufficient cage space, failing to provide protection from the elements, failing to have sufficient barriers, failing to provide clean water, failing to store food properly, failing to submit itineraries, failing to have complete animal records, and failing to provide dogs with an exercise plan and primates with a program of environmental enrichment. In 1991, the USDA fined Antle \$3,500 to settle multiple and repeated violations of the AWA. Also in 1991, a lion attacked a model during a photo shoot in New Hampshire—the woman sustained injuries requiring more than 50 stitches. T.I.G.E.R.S. was previously located in Tennessee. Antle has also done business under the name “Buckingham Zoological Park” in Virginia.**

**Contact PETA for documentation.**

**January 6, 2021:** In an interview for National Geographic’s *Trafficked* series, Antle claimed that the Samutprakan Crocodile Farm and Zoo in Thailand—where he sent seven tigers in July 2006—was a “beautiful” facility. A PETA Asia exposé, a 2019 *National Geographic* tell-all, and a report by investigative journalist Mariana van Zeller all found the opposite: Eyewitnesses saw workers impale elephants with sharp metal tools to make them perform confusing tricks, and crocodiles were hit with bamboo poles. Tiger handlers carried wooden rods with them as they forced wailing and distressed tigers to pose for tourists’ photos while chained to the concrete floor by their necks.

**November 12, 2020:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have a responsible adult available so that an inspection could be conducted at the Myrtle Beach location.

**October 8, 2020:** Antle was charged with one felony count of wildlife trafficking, one felony count of conspiracy to traffic wildlife, four misdemeanor counts of conspiracy to violate the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and nine misdemeanor counts of cruelty to animals by the Virginia Attorney General’s Office. Two of Antle’s daughters were also indicted on misdemeanor counts of cruelty to animals and violating the ESA. The charges followed an investigation into the trafficking of lions between Antle and Keith Wilson, the owner of the now-defunct Wilson’s Wild Animal Park in Winchester, Virginia. Wilson was indicted on the same charges as Antle and four additional counts of conspiracy.

**July 17, 2019:** Antle shipped two 8-month-old tigers to Ryan Easley, a circus trainer who had been caught whipping tigers,

including one who was reportedly struck 31 times.

**April 1, 2019:** Antle sold two 8-month-old tigers to Jay Owenhouse, a magician who exploits tigers in a traveling act.

**September 10, 2018:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have a responsible adult available so that an inspection could be conducted at a Miami location.

**January 11, 2018:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to maintain in good repair a primary enclosure holding two gibbons, Santoshi and Saiuka, at a Miami location. Sharp ends of damaged and deteriorating tin and metal components were exposed within their reach, risking injury to the animals.

**January 31, 2017:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to maintain in good repair a primary enclosure for the cougar at a Miami location. Three metal hose clamps were deteriorating and had sharp points and edges that could injure the animal.

**May 21, 2016:** A roadside zoo in Oklahoma shipped three tiger cubs who were just 8 hours old to Antle.

**March 24, 2016:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have a program of veterinary care that addressed a recurring problem at the facility—two white tiger cubs exhibited ringworm-like lesions. The agency noted the need to address public-safety issues, including when the animals could have contact with the public.

**February 18, 2016:** The USDA cited Antle for a direct violation after he failed to provide big cats with adequate veterinary care at his Myrtle Beach location. Aslan, an older lion, was missing hair on his lower legs and along his right hindquarters. The exposed skin was pink to red in color and

an open, raw, bright red lesion was visible on his lower right rear leg. Aslan, who was confined to a concrete-floored enclosure with only a slippery-looking mat for resting, appeared stiff when rising and walked with an occasional stumble. He had been seen by the attending veterinarian in early January, but the facility representative stated that his condition had deteriorated in the last couple of weeks, and the attending veterinarian had not been contacted since his condition worsened. Kailash, a 14-year-old white tiger, was very thin and had protruding hip bones and vertebrae. The attending veterinarian had seen him in early January and recommended that blood work be done, but the facility had declined. Kailash was eating, but he was not gaining weight. The veterinarian had not been updated on his condition. Another tiger, named Mooton, was housed separately to monitor his health because he had not been eating well and seemed stressed by ongoing construction. The veterinarian had not been contacted about him. The USDA inspectors contacted the veterinarian and cited Antle for failing to have a mechanism of direct and frequent communication to convey animal health problems to the veterinarian.

Antle was also cited for failing to provide a 3- to 4-year-old chimpanzee with an enclosure that met the minimum space requirements and failing to have his social needs addressed in the Environmental Enhancement Plan, as he was the only primate at this location. In addition, Antle was cited for failing to provide leopards with sufficient space. The leopard housing consisted of four small feeding stations and a large outdoor enclosure. Each of the metal feeding stations was approximately 3 feet tall, 2 feet wide, and 6 feet long, all connected by a hallway. During the inspection, one leopard was confined to the feeding stations while two others were in the outdoor enclosure. The leopards were

rotated into the enclosure for exercise, but the feeding stations section didn't offer sufficient space to allow the animals to make normal postural adjustments with adequate freedom of movement while they were confined there.

On the same day, at a Miami location, the USDA cited Antle for failing to have sufficient regularly scheduled visits to the premises by the attending veterinarian, as required by the written program of veterinary care, and failing to clear a large accumulation of debris near the perimeter fence to minimize the risk of vermin infestation and potential disease hazards to animals. He was also cited for failing to maintain the perimeter fence so that it could work as a secondary containment system for animals on the premises.

**October 21, 2015:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have a responsible adult available so that an inspection could be conducted at a Miami location.

**April 28, 2015:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to keep the food-preparation area free of "pests" and possible contamination at a Miami location. Several spiders, spider webs, and a frog were touching recently washed food bowls, and rodent droppings were on the floor.

**April 23, 2015:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have a responsible adult available so that an inspection could be conducted at a Miami location.

**April 14, 2015:** A roadside zoo in Virginia shipped four tiger cubs who were only a week old to Antle.

**April 13, 2015:** A roadside zoo in Oklahoma shipped three tiger cubs who were only a day old to Antle.

**September 16, 2014:** A roadside zoo in Oklahoma shipped two tiger cubs who were only 5 days old to Antle.

**June 14, 2014:** A roadside zoo in Missouri shipped three tiger cubs who were only 5 days old to Antle.

**February 5, 2014:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to provide a 10-month-old male tiger with a secure enclosure at a Miami location.

**August 21, 2013:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to maintain the food-storage areas at a Miami location in good repair. The shelves in the walk-in cooler were coated with a thick, unidentifiable white substance, and the floor had a broken or missing tile.

**October 6, 2012:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to handle an adult liger and tigers in a safe manner during public exhibition at the King Richard's Faire in Carver, Massachusetts. The handler led the big cats onto the stage by a chain leash with only a 3- to 4-foot-tall wooden rail as a barrier between the animals and the audience.

**November 16, 2010:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to maintain structurally sound housing facilities to contain animals. Even though an adult tiger escaped from an uncovered outdoor primary enclosure at a Miami exhibition location (see August 28, 2010), 43 adult tigers, three ligers, and two lions were being housed on a rotating basis in similar uncovered enclosures at a Myrtle Beach site. Many of these enclosures also had a substantial number of vines growing up the sides and accumulating at the top of the fences, which could aid in big-cat escapes.

**September 1, 2010:** The USDA cited Antle for a direct violation after he failed to provide Mahesh, an adult tiger, with an enclosure designed to contain him in order

to ensure public safety. After Mahesh escaped from an enclosure at Jungle Island Zoo (see the August 28, 2010, entry), he was moved to a similarly constructed enclosure at Antle's other Miami location.

**August 28, 2010:** A tiger exhibited by Antle at Jungle Island Zoo escaped after Watson, an adult gibbon, was able to escape his enclosure and enter the tiger's enclosure, possibly because of an old, rusty lock that wouldn't close properly and a second door that was momentarily ajar. A USDA inspector inspecting Jungle Island Zoo wrote, "The tiger [Mahesh] was motivated to chase a non-human primate which had entered the enclosure through the uncovered top and was quickly trying to exit back out of the enclosure after encountering a tiger. The tiger was able to scale a 12 foot tall corner, engage and damage the kick back and subsequently escape over the top of the enclosure. The tiger did not fall or jump cleanly upon exiting the enclosure and was stunned for a short time after hitting metal poles and parts of the barrier fence surrounding the outside of the enclosure." According to *Time*, visitors had to scramble frantically to get away from the 700-pound tiger, and one woman claimed that he got within 10 feet of her 2-year-old daughter.

**June 8, 2010:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have a responsible adult available at a Miami location so that an inspection could be conducted.

**April 22, 2008:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to establish and maintain programs of veterinary care. The most recent tuberculosis test results available for Bubbles, an African elephant, were more than a year old, even though she had direct contact with the public and tuberculosis is a contagious disease affecting elephants, humans, and other animals. Professional guidelines indicated that tuberculosis testing

needed to be conducted no less than annually.

**December 13, 2007:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized risk of harm to them and the public during a traveling exhibit. An 8-month-old tiger was exhibited to the public without sufficient distance or barriers present, and a cougar was exhibited without sufficient distance from the public.

**June 13, 2007:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to observe all animals on a daily basis to assess their health and well-being. A white tiger had a red, raised nodular mass on the inside of his left ear that Antle was unaware of. He was also cited for failing to have adequate cleaning, sanitization, housekeeping, and "pest" control. The light fixture in the mandrill enclosure had hot wire surrounding it, which was covered with spider webs, and live spiders were observed in the area. The USDA also cited him for failing to maintain the structural integrity of an enclosure holding Burma, a 22-year-old tiger. The bottom edge of the chain-link enclosure fencing was not secured, which could have allowed her to dig and escape or other animals to dig into the enclosure. In addition, Antle was cited for failing to provide adequate lighting for three stalls housing eight animals. They had no artificial light and a limited amount of natural light was coming from the windows, which prevented proper inspection.

**June 5, 2007:** After Antle sued the USDA over the agency's position that his photo-op methods were not in compliance with the AWA (see the August 26, 2005, entry), a court ruled in favor of the USDA and found that it had appropriate basis and reason for finding Antle's encounters to be unlawful.

**April 9, 2007:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to maintain adequate veterinary care at a Miami location. The written program of

veterinary care had not been formally reviewed by the attending veterinarian for 18 months, and a formal site visit by the attending veterinarian had not occurred for 18 months. He was also cited for failing to have an environmental enrichment program that included special considerations for primates exhibiting signs of psychological stress. A mandrill named Congo had alopecia on all four of his limbs initiated and sustained by overgrooming. Antle verbally described special environmental enhancement that could be given to this mandrill, but these enhancements were neither evident nor documented in the primate enrichment plan.

**July 2006:** Antle sent seven tigers overseas to the Samutprakan Crocodile Farm and Zoo in Thailand, which uses tigers for “tiger selfie” photo ops. Antle’s shipment of the endangered animals was permitted through a “pay to play” loophole in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s enforcement of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Under this scheme, applicants seeking exceptions to the protections endangered animals are afforded under the law can donate as little as \$500 to a conservation organization in lieu of demonstrating that exporting or importing an endangered animal will help the species survive, as the ESA otherwise requires.

**March 3, 2006:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to provide adequate lighting in an indoor enclosure at a Miami site. A mandrill was intermittently housed in an enclosure that wasn’t sufficiently illuminated and didn’t permit adequate observation of the animal to maintain good housekeeping practices, adequate cleaning, and adequate inspection of the animal to ensure his well-being.

**August 26, 2005:** The USDA advised Antle that his practice of allowing members of the public to have direct contact with adult big cats in photo-op encounters was considered

to be in violation of the AWA’s handling regulations and instructed him that the encounters “should be discontinued immediately.”

**June 29, 2005:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have a written plan for environmental enhancement to promote psychological well-being for the three primates at the facility.

**March 30, 2005:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to store potentially toxic materials properly while traveling. Chemicals including paints and insecticides were stored in open bins in the areas housing binturongs and a skunk, and a gas-fueled motorcycle was stored in the area housing a porcupine and coatimundi.

**October 21, 2003:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to maintain up-to-date animal records.

**August 4, 2003:** The USDA cited Antle while traveling for failing to follow the current exotic feline diet as approved by the attending veterinarian. The diet required a percentage of commercially prepared food, none of which could be identified on the premises. It was also noted by the inspector that several species present were not listed on the program of veterinary care.

**October 22, 2002:** The USDA cited Antle while traveling for failing to maintain structurally sound primate housing facilities. An enclosure had a damaged light fixture hanging from the ceiling, and several screws protruded from exhibit surfaces, risking injury to the animals.

**January 24, 2002:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to maintain structurally sound animal housing facilities. Several door openings had been cut through concrete-block walls, resulting in rough surfaces that

couldn't easily be cleaned and could injure the animals.

**October 9, 2001:** The USDA cited Antle during exhibition at Alligator Adventure in North Myrtle Beach for failing to store food for two adult tigers properly. The walk-in freezer was being used to store food for the felines as well as dead animals—they weren't in airtight bags and could have been sources of infectious organisms. Antle was also cited for failing to protect food from contamination. Animals' food was being thawed outdoors in an uncovered cardboard box with flies present on and around the food. Finally, Antle was cited for failing to have a clean freezer. The walk-in freezer had debris and animal carcasses on the floor and on top of wooden pallets.

**September 9, 1999:** The USDA cited Antle at the King Richard's Faire in Carver, Massachusetts, for failing to maintain current, accurate records on animals.

**April 13, 1999:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have a written feeding plan approved by the attending veterinarian for the large felines at his facility.

**October 7, 1998:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have current, accurate records on animals available for inspection.

**December 18, 1997:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to review and update the primate environmental program to include all primates at the facility, failing to keep the premises free of trash and debris, failing to maintain the lion and squirrel enclosures in good repair, and failing to keep food free of possible contamination. The hay trailer had old cans of paint on shelves above the hay.

**April 25, 1994:** The USDA cited Antle on exhibit at the I-X Center in Cleveland, Ohio, for failing to submit a copy of his travel itinerary. He was also cited for failing to

provide three macaques and a baboon with sufficient space in two separate enclosures.

**January 26, 1994:** The USDA cited Antle while exhibiting in Gulfport, Mississippi, for failing to submit a copy of his travel itinerary.

**December 13–14, 1993:** The USDA cited Antle for multiple violations, including failing to keep animal enclosures clean, failing to properly store hay for the elephant—which was on the ground and partially exposed to rainfall—failing to provide the wolf hybrids and tigers with enclosures with enough space to allow them to make normal postural adjustments, failing to provide a tiger and a leopard being housed in transport cages with adequate protection from the elements, failing to provide adequate drainage in several areas, failing to keep food and water receptacles clean for a number of animals, failing to provide hooved animals with a water source other than a pond, failing to remove accumulations of feces from the raccoon and aoudad enclosures, failing to maintain in good repair the night boxes in six enclosures, and failing to keep the fence in good repair.

**November 12, 1993:** Antle was assessed a \$1,000 civil penalty for failing to conduct a required official brucellosis test and failing to have a certificate containing the required information for the interstate transport of bison from Florida to Tennessee in January 1990. See the February 23, 1992, entry.

**July 16, 1993:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have someone available to provide access for inspection while in South Carolina.

**July 14, 1993:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to provide an adequate barrier between the public and African lions, failing to have animal records available, and failing

to notify the USDA of operation of business at Barefoot Landing in North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Antle was again cited for failing to have a program of veterinary care available at the facility.

**April 12, 1993:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have the required identification for big cats and a snow leopard during a traveling exhibition. He was also cited for failing to have a complete written program of veterinary care.

**March 2, 1993:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to maintain a safe enclosure for two lemurs. Fluorescent lights and electrical wire were within the animals' reach, and a fence in an exercise pen had sharp and twisted ends. He was also cited for failing to maintain the walls around holding pens so that they could be properly cleaned, failing to keep the food trailer free of manure and debris, and failing to have permanent identification for all 13 primates on the premises. Antle was again cited for failing to have a current written veterinary care program.

**February 23, 1993:** The USDA filed a complaint against Antle for alleged violations of the Animal Quarantine Act for transporting a bull from Florida to Nashville, Tennessee, without having an official brucellosis test performed on him and for failing to having the prescribed information on the certificate accompanying the bull.

**February 21, 1993:** The USDA cited Antle on exhibit in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, for failing to have complete veterinary records. The inspector also noted, "Due to the nature of the close contact the tigers [and] ligers have with the public some quick means of immobilization should be on hand, such as a tranquilizer gun."

**May 27–28, 1992:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to provide a zebra—who had long,

cracked front hooves that were partially broken off and needed to be trimmed—with veterinary care and for failing to maintain a safe enclosure for the zebra, donkey, and sheep. The corral had wire with sharp edges along a wooden post.

**May 7, 1992:** In a cover letter attached to a USDA investigation into Antle, the investigator states, "Antle's statements concerning the incidents and related problems were inconsistent in many areas. The feeling of all the investigators mentioned in this report is Antle is of questionable character. His description of the incident is inconsistent with other witnesses interviewed."

**April 24, 1992:** The USDA issued a 13-page report detailing its investigation into an incident in which a woman was attacked and severely bitten by a lion held by Antle while being used in a photoshoot in New Hampshire (see the October 9, 1991, entry). The report describes the inspection of Antle's facility at King Richard's Faire in Carver, Massachusetts, immediately after the incident: "Upon arrival we were met with some resistance." Multiple violations were found and cited, including that the "lion and tiger enclosure [was] found to have a bloody stool present, ... the white tiger appeared to be straining to urinate, [and] Antle had no local veterinarian for emergencies." Other violations included using rusty, old, dirty frying pans as water receptacles; storing items above big-cat enclosures; and having an accumulation of bedding, dirt, and leaves in the white tiger's transport enclosure. The report also notes that Antle's permit to possess dangerous animals in Massachusetts had expired and that he was in the state illegally. A summons was issued, and he was instructed to leave the state within 24 hours or the animal would be seized. Antle left Massachusetts the following day after paying a \$50 fine. The USDA interviewed the woman who was

bitten by the lion. She stated that the animal grabbed her by the head, causing injuries requiring more than 50 stitches and leaving her with two scars, one 7 inches long and the other 3 inches long.

In a sworn affidavit given to the USDA, the woman stated that she was told she “had nothing to worry about and this lion had never hurt anyone.” She also testified, “The lion was acting somewhat lethargic. They had to use various techniques to keep the lion’s attention such as snapping fingers or banging sticks.” After going through a series of poses, she said, “I felt a [sudden] jerk [and] tug and a pull on my head. I said ‘oh my God get me out of here.’” The woman’s five-day hospital stay cost approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000, and she was unable to work for two weeks. She also had to undergo a three-month series of rabies shots, as Antle did not know if the animal had been vaccinated.

**March 25, 1992:** A letter sent to Antle by the USDA demanded payment for the \$3,500 civil penalty imposed on him on October 22, 1991. The letter went on to say that the check that Antle had sent had already been rejected twice by the bank because of insufficient funds.

**February 27, 1992:** A USDA investigation report detailed alleged violations of US Fish and Wildlife regulations by Antle’s interstate movement of tiger cubs not accompanied by health certificates. The inspector stated, “This investigation has taken a long period of time to assemble the information submitted. This in part was due to Antle presenting false and misleading information as to the location of the tiger in question.” The report states that Antle had been charged with previous violations of the AWA.

**February 11–12, 1992:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to supply adequate

veterinary care to several animals who required treatment. A potbellied pig was found limping after being injured by dogs, a lion had old wounds that needed to be tended to, a macaque was in the performance area with a bandaged tail, and a leopard had hair loss on his neck and apparent chronic thickened skin.

Antle was also cited for failing to keep primate cages clean and sanitary, failing to ventilate the primate enclosure sufficiently—there were ammonia odors and kerosene heaters in use, which needed good ventilation—failing to provide primates with adequate protection from the elements, and failing to implement a program of environmental enrichment for the primates.

Additional citations included failing to store food properly to protect it from contamination, not having a suitable method to eliminate excess water in the zebra and water buffalo enclosures rapidly, and failing to handle animals in a safe manner. Animals in the pasture were left unattended wearing halters, risking harm when moving through trees, reaching through fences, and eating from the metal feeder with other animals. Antle was also cited for failing to correct noncompliant items cited in previous inspections, including not providing adequate drainage in a guanaco pen, failing to provide proof that a veterinarian had tended to the hair loss problem on the leopard and coatimundi, failing to submit a copy of his itinerary, and failing to address the rodent problem in a leopard’s den box.

**November 19, 1991:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to supply adequate veterinary care to a clouded leopard who was suffering from chronic hair loss and a coatimundi whose coat was in poor condition and for keeping an electric space heater in the elephant enclosure with the cord hanging within reach of the elephant. The inspector noted that he was concerned about the



safety of space heaters in general and in barns in particular. Antle was also cited for failing to maintain the zebra, primate, and leopard enclosures to protect the animals from injury; failing to provide a potbellied pig and a lemur with a safe nursery area (the electrical switch was hanging out of the box, posing a danger to the animals and the facility); failing to store bedding in a closed container to prevent contamination; failing to provide adequate drainage in the guanaco enclosure, which was muddy and wet; failing to keep the primates' food receptacles clean (algae was found inside a bucket); failing to clean the coatimundi enclosure; failing to clean the performance and holding areas; and failing to have an effective "pest" control method (mice were living in the bedding of the transport vehicle, and flies were evident in the nursery). Antle was also cited for failing to keep transport vehicles in good repair: A horse trailer had a broken tail light and a pickup truck with an animal transport enclosure in the bed had broken mirrors and unstable construction.

During this inspection, the USDA also cited Antle for failing to correct items that were found noncompliant during previous inspections: Several animal enclosures were in need of repair, mice were still evident in the leopard's bedding, and there was still neither a program of exercise for the dogs nor a program of environmental enrichment for the primates.

**October 22, 1991:** The USDA entered a consent decision order with Antle to address a number of violations of the AWA. He was issued a \$3,500 civil penalty and ordered not to violate the act. (See the September 6, 1991, entry.)

**October 11, 1991:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to provide a lion and a tiger with veterinary care—the lion and tiger enclosure contained stool with blood present and the white tiger appeared to be straining to

urinate—and failing to provide a mountain lion, two tigers, and a lion with clean water—the containers were “rusty old frying pans [and/or] dirty.” He was also cited with failing to keep enclosures free of debris, failing to identify transport vehicles properly, failing to maintain complete records, and failing to keep transport vehicles clean.

The Animal Rescue League of Boston detailed its own investigation into the lion attack (see the October 9, 1991, entry). Immediately after the group's inspectors arrived at Antle's exhibition site in Carver, Massachusetts, they found that the cougar, lion cub, hawk, and eagle were without water. The containers for the lion and tiger were “very small,” and the water for the white tiger was in a “rusted pan.”

After Antle was read the Miranda warning, he said that he had nothing to hide and gave the following statements. When it was explained to him that on more than one occasion, he and his staff were seen striking the animals with a closed fist, Antle admitted that punching wild cats was “a method they employ when an animal misbehaves as behavior modification and in no way hurts the animals because tissue is not damaged. He stated that you can only be cruel if you cause visible damage.” It was also pointed out that during exhibitions, the animals had no water. He replied that if water was available, they would make a mess, but he provided animals with water off-site every two to three hours. The inspectors also noted that the cages that the animals were kept in failed to protect them from the elements. Antle replied that the shelter was sufficient. This report confirmed that he was issued a violation for having an expired permit and was fined \$50 and ordered to leave the state. See the April 24, 1992, entry.

**October 9, 1991:** A lion who was being used by Antle in a photo shoot in

Manchester, New Hampshire, attacked a model. According to a local police report, when they arrived at the scene, a vehicle with an unknown driver and passenger were leaving. The police stopped the vehicle and ordered the driver to return to the scene. The police followed the vehicle back to the site, and it was then ascertained that the passenger was Antle. He told the officer that “he did not know what the [big] deal was about.” The officer questioned Antle as to why he was in such a hurry to leave. He replied that “he did not want to get invol[v]ed with the press.” The police were told that the lion had been vaccinated for rabies, but when the officer went to the hospital to take a report, he was told that information given to the police earlier was false: The attending physician told the officer that no rabies vaccination for lions exists. The doctor said that it was imperative that it be determined which shots or vaccinations the lion had received.

Police efforts to contact personnel at the Buckingham Zoological Park (Antle’s business of record) for a record search were futile, as were efforts to contact Antle himself. The police put out a bulletin to be on the lookout for Antle’s vehicle, as it was known that he was leaving the area. The sheriff’s department later learned of Antle’s new facility in Tennessee, but efforts to contact him were still unsuccessful. The department also received information that he was operating under suspension in Virginia and that “he is of questionable character.” Two days later, on October 11, 1991, Antle was located and gave a statement in which he claimed that the lion’s “front tooth grazed the head of the girl .... At no time did the lion actually attack the girl.” He went on to swear that the “lion was playing and pushed the girl with his foot toward himself.”

**September 23–24, 1991:** The USDA cited Antle for multiple violations, including failing

to provide a thin young zebra who had poor muscle tone and appeared unsteady with adequate veterinary care, failing to provide a young zebra with an adequate diet, failing to provide dogs with an exercise plan, failing to provide primates with a program of environmental enrichment, failing to provide a monkey with enough space to stand erect with arms in the air, failing to provide wholesome food—hay for animals appeared dusty and musty—failing to provide animals with structurally safe and sound housing, failing to have an effective “pest” control program in the food storage area, failing to provide adequate drainage in the zebra pen that had standing water, failing to keep the elephant barn free of excreta, and failing to hose down the compound area daily.

**September 6, 1991:** The USDA filed a complaint against Antle for alleged violations of the AWA, including failing to provide animals with housing facilities that were sound and maintained in good repair to protect them from injury, contain them, and restrict the entrance of other animals. He had also apparently failed to keep the premises clean, in good repair, and free of accumulations of trash; failed to store food and bedding so as to provide adequate protection against infestation or contamination by vermin; failed to have a suitable method to eliminate excess water rapidly from outdoor housing facilities for animals; failed to clean primary enclosures; and failed to maintain complete records showing the acquisition, disposition, and identification of animals.

**July 16, 1991:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have an approved program of veterinary care; failing to have a barrier fence “to keep [the] animal (elephant) from running onto [the] highway if [the] handler lost control of [the] animal”; failing to handle a zebra properly who was dragging a long lead rope that could get snagged; failing to protect animals from predators (a monkey

was kept next to a coyote, and a baboon was kept next to a jaguar, which led the baboon to display abnormal leg-biting behavior); failing to provide adequate “pest” control; failing to provide animals with sufficient shade; failing to provide animals with adequate shelter from rain; failing to provide the animals with structurally safe and sound housing kept in good repair; failing to provide adequate ventilation in the tiger cub room; failing to keep food receptacles clean; failing to provide adequate lighting (a tiger was able to turn off the lights); failing to store food and bedding properly to protect it against deterioration, mold, and vermin; failing to provide water as often as possible; failing to clean water receptacles (frying pans and buckets that were used were dirty and/or rusty); failing to keep enclosures clean; failing to keep facilities and grounds clean and in good repair; failing to identify dogs properly; failing to keep transport trailers structurally sound and in good repair; and failing to have records available for inspection. The USDA also cited Antle again for failing to notify the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of an elephant who was exhibited at a second site and failing to provide a copy of his itinerary.

**July 11, 1991:** According to an article in *The Knoxville Journal*, Antle was the focus of various ongoing investigations by federal and state agencies for alleged violations while in Tennessee. It also stated that he was being sued by at least three parties. One lawsuit involved a Knoxville couple who were suing him over India, a Bengal tiger they claimed to have paid him \$3,000 for. The couple took possession of the tiger, but six months later, they returned India to Antle to be boarded. The couple learned that he abused the tiger and demanded India’s return. Antle responded that he had not sold them the tiger and that the \$3,000 was merely an adoption fee. A Sevier County Circuit Court judge signed an order for the

return of India to the couple in February 1991, but Antle would not reveal where the tiger was. India was finally returned to the couple in September 1991, after they retrieved her from a breeding facility in Pennsylvania that Antle had sent her to.

**May 7, 1991:** In a third pre-license inspection, the USDA cited Antle for failing to have a perimeter fence to contain the elephant or to protect the animal from predators or vandals. The inspector also recommended that Antle provide the primates with adequate lighting and provide an adequate source of water. He was also told that he was required to provide the primates with a program of environmental enrichment.

**April 26, 1991:** The USDA issued a report detailing Antle’s alleged violations of the AWA. The report stated, “It is apparent that [Antle] ... is exhibiting wild and exotic animals without an exhibitor license as required by the Animal Welfare Act.” Witnesses had observed him using an elephant, a lion, and tigers in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, and tigers in Maryville, Tennessee, to make a film.

**March 21, 1991:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to provide access for inspection.

**March 12, 1991:** In his second pre-license inspection, the USDA cited Antle for failing to have an effective fence to contain tigers, failing again to provide three primates with artificial heat—they were kept in an unheated outdoor facility—failing to have a veterinarian, failing to have adequate protection between the animals and the public, exposing animals to possible drowning by having a moat as a public barrier, and failing to have a restroom, sink, or soap available. The inspector noted that Antle was also keeping animals at a different facility—this site needed to be

inspected and approved of before licensing as well.

**January 24, 1991:** At a first pre-license inspection in Tennessee, the USDA cited Antle for failing to provide three primates with a source of heat in their enclosure. He was also cited for having a veterinarian with little experience in exotic animal care. The inspector stated, "I do not feel [the veterinarian] could fulfill the qualifications of attending veterinarian if he were the only one servicing this facility." The inspector concluded his report by saying, "The Antle facility is far from complete."

**December 5, 1990:** A three-page memo written by a USDA inspector detailed efforts to investigate complaints that Antle had allegedly been holding photo sessions with tigers in Tennessee. In the section titled "Background," the inspector stated, "Mr. Antle came to Tenn. from Buckingham, Va. where there were incidents we had questions about. One was an alleged tiger bite to someone at his facility. Another was an alleged violation re some animals left behind at Buckingham, Va. when he came to Tenn." He went on to note, "There [are] apparently some problems with ... endangered species permits." The inspector stated, "Mr. Antle ... became associated with Nashville Zoo .... Apparently, he was later asked to leave." The inspector closed his report by stating, "I am concerned about the well-being of these animals. In this case, I am perhaps more concerned about the safety of the public. Some very dangerous animals are involved. Mr. Antle seems to pay no attention to what I tell him."

**October 6, 1990:** During a bodybuilding event at a Sevier County, Tennessee, high school, Antle allowed several people to pose with one of his tigers. The bodybuilders were also able to touch the tiger with their hands. An arrest warrant was subsequently issued charging Antle with

allowing direct contact between dangerous animals and the public. An article in *The Journal* stated that he had been the subject of investigations by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency as well as the USDA and "had been targeted with several lawsuits."

**April 18, 1990:** In a sworn affidavit, a Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries game warden sergeant described his visits to Antle's Virginia premises. He stated that between December 1989 and January 1990, he made multiple visits after receiving a call from the USDA concerning some deer. On the first visit, he saw no deer but did observe deer tracks. On his second visit, he observed two deer, who were later determined not to be white-tailed deer. On subsequent visits, the sighting of the deer varied, and he found a hole in the perimeter fence. During one visit, he also found two peacocks—one living and one dead. The warden stated, "I did not observe anyone at the compound nor did it appear anyone was feeding the deer and peacock, regularly."

**March 9, 1990:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have someone present to accompany inspectors.

**December 27, 1989:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to notify the agency of a change of location of the animals. No one was present at the facility, all gates of the perimeter fence were padlocked, and all animal pens, as viewed from the outside, were empty. Antle was also cited for failing to submit an itinerary and an inventory,

**August 14, 1989:** The USDA issued an official notification and a warning of violation of federal regulations to Antle for failing to submit travel itineraries and maintain records. The notice stated, "These are [recurring] discrepancies."

**March 15, 1989:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to keep the fencing in the hooved-animal enclosure in good repair and failing to have a complete inventory, acquisition and disposition forms, and an itinerary.

**June 17, 1988:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to have a suitable method to eliminate excess water rapidly. The area of ground under the coyote/sheltie pen contained standing water.

**March 24, 1988:** The USDA cited Antle for failing to maintain an enclosure containing two coyote hybrids. A hole approximately a square foot in size at the rear of the enclosure needed to be filled to prevent the escape of the animals. Antle was also cited for failing to store and prepare food properly to prevent contamination and maintain wholesomeness, failing to clean excreta from enclosures, failing to keep fencing in the hooved-animal enclosure in good repair, and failing to provide copies of his records or travel itinerary.

**August 28, 1987:** The USDA sent Antle a letter stating, "We are advised that on February 28, 1986, a tiger which you were handling severely injured [a man] of Studio City, California. . . . In view of the investigative report, we are very concerned that the tigers handled by you might be exhibited in a fashion that presents considerable risk to the viewing public, to handlers, and ultimately to the animals if a violent incident were to occur."