

December 15, 2015

Shane Davis, Animal Control Supervisor
Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

Dear Mr. Davis,

I am writing on behalf of PETA to request that you immediately inspect the Cherokee Bear Zoo (CBZ), operated by Barry Coggins. An individual who visited the facility Monday, December 13, observed and documented **a black bear with a pronounced limp in his or her right forelimb**. See [Video](#). The animal was also reportedly **passing loose stool**. Veterinarian Dr. Heather Rally reviewed video footage of the bear and concluded that:

[T]his bear does have obvious right forelimb lameness and seems to be generally stiff and reluctant to walk. The right forelimb requires examination by a qualified veterinarian. Whether there is systemic illness or more generalized musculoskeletal disease happening here is unknown, but also worth investigating. The condition most likely will require diagnostics and an appropriate therapeutic plan to relieve pain, provide treatment, and prevent the progression of her lameness.

Confining bears on a hard, unyielding substrate such as concrete can predispose bears to early-onset osteoarthritis, a painful and debilitating condition. In addition, pacing on a hard concrete floor wears down a bears' paw pads, which are adapted for soft forest floors. These paw pads can also dry out when the concrete surfaces become wet through hosing down or swimming, which washes away the bears' natural oils and causes the pads to become painfully cracked. This bear is plainly suffering from a painful condition, and requires veterinary care as well as an appropriate natural substrate to ensure and maintain proper skin and joint health.

The Cherokee Code mandates that “[n]o licensee shall display ... any animal with obvious signs” of “[i]nfectious diseases,” “[n]utritional diseases,” “parasitism,” or “[f]ractures, lameness or congenital abnormalities affecting the general health of the animal.” Cherokee Code § 19-13(b)(1). This animal was put on display while showing “obvious signs” of “lameness,” and his or her diarrhea may also be a sign of infection, parasites, or a nutritional disease.

Please immediately inspect CBZ to ensure that this animal receives immediate veterinary attention and appropriate care. Please also take action to revoke CBZ’s license to display animals in accordance with Cherokee Code § § 19-13(a)(2)(c), which provides that failure to follow the code or to “provide adequate housing facilities, medical attention, exercise, [and] enclosures for the animal(s),” is grounds for license suspension or revocation of a license to display animals.

PETA stands ready to assist in any way that it is able, including by arranging for an independent expert to assist in your investigation and for placement of this bear or any other animal at CBZ at a reputable sanctuary. Please hold all responsible parties fully accountable for any and all violations that you discover during your investigation.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter.

Very truly yours,



Rachel Mathews

Counsel | Captive Animal Law Enforcement

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS
FOUNDATION

Washington, D.C.
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

Oakland
554 Grand Ave.
Oakland, CA 94610
510-763-PETA

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