

# Wildlife in Need, Inc. Tim Stark

3320 Jack Teeple Rd., Charlestown, IN 47111

**Tim Stark, operating as Wildlife in Need, Inc. (WIN), has failed to meet minimum standards for the care of animals used in exhibitions as established in the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has cited Wildlife in Need, Inc., for numerous infractions, including improper handling of animals, failure to provide clean water, failure to maintain clean and safe enclosures, and failure to provide veterinary care. In 2013, the USDA discovered that Wildlife in Need had been misrepresenting information concerning its attending veterinarian. The veterinarian it had listed had not examined the animals at this facility in two to three years. Stark also pleaded guilty in a U.S. district court to federal charges of unlawful receipt, transport, and shipping of an endangered species in interstate commerce in the course of commercial activity. He was sentenced to three years of probation and fined \$5,000. Contact PETA for documentation.**

**April 8, 2020:** Stark and WIN lost their appeal of the USDA's February 3, 2020, order. The decision recognized Stark and WIN's "repeated failures to handle animals carefully, particularly repeated exposure of the public and animals to risks by failing to provide proper distance and barriers during exhibition particularly with small children and infants present ... repeated failures to provide attending veterinarian supervision and involvement ... [and] repeated failures to provide adequate veterinary care to animals that may have resulted in the deaths of many animals." His AWA license was revoked on June 11, 2020.

**February 11, 2020:** Indiana's attorney general filed a lawsuit against Wildlife in Need for allegedly abusing exotic animals, including when Stark punched a sloth in the face and repeatedly stomped on a tiger cub who had bitten him. The lawsuit seeks the transfer of the animals to court-approved animal sanctuaries.

**February 3, 2020:** The USDA issued an order permanently revoking the AWA license of Stark and WIN and assessed a fine of \$340,000 in civil penalties. The decision was based on more than 120 violations of the AWA between 2012 and 2016 and recognized that Stark and WIN "willfully violated the AWA on multiple occasions," that "the gravity of such violations was great," that "there is a history of previous violations," and that Stark and WIN "did not act in good faith." The revocation stems from an administrative lawsuit filed by the USDA against Stark and WIN in 2016. (See the July 8, 2016, entry.)

**March 29, 2017:** The USDA cited Stark for failing to follow a 21-day suspension beginning on March 24, 2017, that prohibited and regulated activities, including exhibiting. There were multiple internet posts and videos of exhibiting activities that took place from March 24 to 26.

Stark was also cited for refusing to allow an inspection to take place. At the front gate, he approached the inspectors wearing a gun on his belt in full view. An inspector noted that this was the first time Stark had been seen carrying a gun during an inspection, and when questioned, Stark said, "I figured fair was fair." He said that the inspectors were allowed on his property but that their armed security was not. When one of the security officers asked why there was a problem now when they had gotten along fine in the past, Stark said, "[Y]ea, [sic] I got along with you just fine, but I'm tired of being bullied." It was explained to him several times that the inspectors couldn't

conduct an inspection on the property without the security officers, as has been the case for the past two years, and if he didn't allow them all in, it would be considered a refusal. When asked if he was refusing the inspection, he said, "Yes, I have no choice, I have to, I'm tired of the bullying factor."

**March 17, 2017:** The USDA cited Stark for interfering with its officials by repeatedly denying that there were any other cubs on the premises besides the two declawed lion cubs and one tiger cub the inspectors had already observed. After he was presented with evidence that the inspection team knew about the animals, he finally admitted that there were two other tiger cubs. He admitted that he had lied to the inspection team because the cubs had undergone a "botched" declaw procedure and that he was "embarrassed" and didn't want the team to see them. He said that the procedure had taken place approximately two weeks earlier. He allowed the team to inspect the cubs but refused to allow an inspection of the room that they were kept in.

The USDA also cited Stark for failing to provide the two 5- to 6-week-old tiger cubs with adequate veterinary care. Their paws were significantly swollen, and the animals were spotting blood and struggling to walk. The cubs had been brought out for the inspection in a crate that was about 24 inches long by 18 inches wide. They had to be physically removed from it, and when persuaded to move, the orange cub would leave spots of blood from the front paws. The white tiger cub was severely lame and dragging a hind limb. This cub consistently lay down and appeared to be suffering throughout the inspection. Stark was also cited for failing to list these cubs in his records—he had recorded only one cub's birth on February 10, 2017, instead of three. The inspector noted, "An orange and white tiger cub were deliberately left off of the

records to provide false information to inspectors, as the licensee had advised during the inspection that the facility only had 1 orange tiger born in 2017." Stark eventually admitted that he had hidden the two cubs because he "did not want to get into trouble for the veterinarian's mistakes."

The USDA also cited Stark for failing to provide a coatimundi—who was missing the end of his or her tail, the stump of which was red, raw, bloody, and swollen—with adequate veterinary care. The animal hadn't been evaluated or treated by a licensed veterinarian. The inspector also noted that at least 20 "wild/exotic" felines on the property at that time had been declawed and that except for two adult tigers, the procedures had taken place within the last two years. ([Declawing violates the AWA](#) unless medically necessary.) One of the cubs who was previously mentioned had a 50 percent chance of dying because of complications from the procedure, according to the attending veterinarian. Stark was also cited for failing to provide primates with adequate enrichment—the majority of the enclosures contained nothing but a water bottle. Boxes of toys had been sitting on the back of the porch for some time, and multiple primates didn't have any hammocks or areas to lie down and hide. They had to remain on a dowel perch or curl up in a corner of the floor.

The USDA also cited Stark for failing to provide animals with sufficient shelter or protection from the sun and wind. The bears, wolves, and coatimundi didn't have sufficient shelter, and the enclosures holding two foxes and a jackal didn't offer enough protection from the sun and wind. Stark was also cited for failing to have a large enough enclosure for a hyena. The animal couldn't stand with his head fully upright nor could he move more than two steps in any direction. In addition, the enclosure for three straw-colored fruit bats wasn't large enough to allow them to fly. It

was also noted that the entire colony of six Jamaican fruit bats had died over a period of less than six weeks, but no necropsies were performed to establish cause of death. Stark was also cited for failing to dispose of expired medications and failing to thaw the food given to the lynx and bobcat. Frozen balls of chicken that had been chewed on were in the enclosures.

**October 12, 2016:** The USDA cited Stark for failing to clean several primate enclosures properly (they contained buildups of brown dirt and grime), failing to have adequate fencing in two enclosures holding tigers (they were less than 12 feet high and didn't have kick-ins or other means to ensure adequate containment), and failing to maintain the fencing in the enclosure holding hyenas, which had holes in it.

**July 8, 2016:** The USDA filed an AWA complaint against Stark and Wildlife in Need alleging over 120 willful violations of the AWA since 2012, including exposing tiger cubs to rough and excessive handling during public encounters, hitting tigers with a riding crop, and failing to obtain veterinary care for leopards suffering from metabolic bone disease, one of whom Stark beat to death with a baseball bat.

**January 20, 2016:** The USDA cited Stark for failing to provide animals with adequate veterinary care. A brown bear named Chloe had an unknown injury "in the area of the left elbow," and there was a significant amount of bright-red blood in her fur. A kangaroo died of unknown causes that the veterinarian hadn't been contacted about—instead of calling the vet when the animal first presented symptoms, a person in Australia was contacted, and the kangaroo died within 24 hours. No necropsy was conducted. Two baby otters died, possibly because of a "formula issue." The vet wasn't contacted, and a necropsy wasn't performed. Finally, an adult otter appeared

sick and died within the hour. The vet wasn't contacted, and a necropsy wasn't conducted.

Stark was also cited for failing to keep the doghouse used by a coyote and a coydog in good repair (nails were protruding out the front, and boards were missing on the roof and sidewall of the shelter box), failing to provide bedding in an enclosure holding a dog and a lion (they could lie on only the snow-covered ground or a dirt floor), failing to have adequate fencing in four enclosures holding big cats (they were less than 12 feet high and didn't have any kick-ins or other means to ensure adequate containment), and failing to provide safe enclosures. A pen containing a tiger had fencing pulled away from the shelter box, and the wires of the broken mesh protruded into the enclosure at eye level. Fencing in the enclosure holding hyenas had pulled apart, causing multiple wires to protrude into the enclosure, coming into contact with the animals. Stark was also cited for failing to provide animals with adequate shelter during inclement weather. The temperatures had been between 7 and 21 degrees with 2 to 3 inches of snow, but the shelter for three wolves was large enough to hold only one animal comfortably. The enclosure was open on all four sides and the top, with no way to block the wind, sun, or rain. A lion and a tiger also didn't have appropriate shelter for the cold winter weather.

Finally, the USDA cited Stark for being verbally hostile and confrontational during the inspection process. When the inspector tried to go over the inspection results with Stark, he was constantly interrupted. In his report, he stated, "The licensee used profanity at least every 2 to 3 words and made it impossible to continue with any conversation." During the exit interview, the inspector requested some records, but Stark refused to provide them.

**October 8, 2015:** The USDA cited Stark for failing to provide a Great Dane with adequate veterinary care. Thick green mucus was being expelled from both eyes, which hadn't been cleaned, and the dog hadn't been examined by a veterinarian. Stark was also cited for failing to keep the housing in good repair in two enclosures holding dogs and a coyote, failing to provide adequate shade in the enclosure holding a Great Dane and a mastiff, and failing to repair a guillotine door inside the enclosure holding three ring-tailed lemurs, which was keeping them from being able to access the sheltered facility during the night and from obtaining food and water. Stark was also cited for failing to have fences of sufficient height to contain big cats properly in four enclosures holding three tigers and two lions and failing to maintain two enclosures holding tigers. An enclosure holding one tiger had numerous nails protruding 2 to 3 inches from two platforms on the climbing tower. The other enclosure, holding four tigers, had a portion of tin that was pulled away from the wall in one of the shelters, causing the pointed corners to protrude into the shelter. He was also cited for failing to maintain the enclosure holding hyenas (multiple wires were protruding into the enclosure from a section of fencing) and the shelter used for the cougar, which had a damaged roof. He was also cited for failing to remove a large buildup of bones in six enclosures holding tigers and one holding a cougar. The bones took up 40 to 50 percent of the floor space, and the enclosure holding the cougar had "a moderate buildup of feces between the water and shelter." Finally, Stark was cited for failing to repair damaged perimeter fencing.

**September 14, 2015:** The USDA suspended Stark's license for 21 days for continually failing to comply with the minimum requirements of the AWA.

**September 13, 2015:** The USDA cited Stark for failing to handle tiger cubs

properly. During "Tiger Playtime," four 16-week-old tiger cubs weighing 35 to 40 pounds each were allowed to interact with approximately 40 to 50 members of the public. Two of the cubs walked into the public area after the gate was opened, one cub who appeared to be asleep was dragged in by his front paws, and the fourth cub was pushed from behind. The cubs had no collars or leashes on them, and the attendants used a riding crop to swat their noses if they started to bite. The inspector noted, "The cubs were swatted frequently with the riding crops when the attendants were near them. Some of the swats were excessive in severity causing the cubs obvious discomfort." Members of the public, including an 8- or 9-year-old girl, were bitten in at least two different incidents.

Stark was also cited for using these cubs every day for months in multiple sessions without sufficient breaks in between. The inspector noted, "The fact that these cubs are allowing the attendants to drag them around by their front legs, non-responsively, suggests they are exhausted and have no choice but to cope with the situation." The cub who had been pulled into the room was pulled to other areas during the 30-minute session. He remained unresponsive and never stood. As the session progressed, two other cubs lay down to nap and then were also dragged around the room. At the end of the "playtime," three of the cubs were dragged by their legs from the exhibit area, and the remaining awake cub was used for photo opportunities.

**July 27, 2015:** The USDA cited Stark for failing to feed four 10-week-old tiger cubs properly. They were still on a formula diet but should have been given meat starting at 2 to 3 weeks of age. And the majority of their diet should have been meat by 8 weeks of age. Stark was also cited for failing to have fences of sufficient height to contain big cats properly in three enclosures holding two tigers and a lion, failing to have

clean water for animals in four enclosures, and failing to maintain the gate to the enclosure holding two hyenas. Broken wires protruded into the enclosure.

**May 20, 2015:** The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) denied Stark's captive-bred wildlife (CBW) application for black-and-white ruffed lemurs, red ruffed lemurs, brown lemurs, ring-tailed lemurs, cotton-top tamarins, lar gibbons, and leopards, all animals on the endangered species list.

The reasons given included the following. First, Stark pleaded guilty to a Lacey Act violation of unlawful receipt, transport, and shipping of an endangered species (an ocelot) in interstate commerce in the course of commercial activity, which he didn't initially disclose on his application form, as was required. A prior Lacey Act conviction bars people from holding a CBW permit. Second, no clear documentation of his expertise with any animals was listed on the application. Third, USDA inspection reports cited repeat violations, which the FWS stated demonstrated "that you have failed to provide a showing of responsibility." Finally, the application didn't provide any evidence that Stark's intent for seeking registration under the CBW program was to enhance the propagation or survival of the species. The FWS noted that the USDA inspection reports detailed "activities associated with the entertainment industry, which is contrary to the intended purpose of the Program."

**November 13, 2014:** According to a captive-bred wildlife permit application that Stark submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, nine animals died over the course of five years at Wildlife in Need: a black bear was killed by another bear, two black-and-white ruffed lemurs died as a result of a malfunctioning heater, a Syrian bear was euthanized because of his "incompatibility with other bears," two ring-tailed lemurs died as a result of "sudden fights," and three spotted leopards died of metabolic disease.

**August 20, 2014:** The USDA cited Stark for failure to handle animals properly. During an event called "Baby Tiger Playtime," at which inspectors were present, up to 30 members of the public were allowed to sit in an enclosed area with two 14-week-old tiger cubs. The "licensee aggravated the [white] tiger by grabbing her by the scruff and bouncing her up and down on his lap and ground while the tiger hissed, growled, and bit at his glove covered hands." Then the licensee dropped the "pissed off" tiger into the "lap of the unsuspecting member of the public sitting next to him." One participant was pawed and mouthed in the face by the white tiger, a child was bitten on the top of his thigh, and one of the inspectors was bitten in the back, resulting in broken skin and bleeding. It was also noted that members of the public riled up the tigers, and when tigers responded playfully, multiple people reacted by swatting the tigers in the face, nose, and eye area. After the Baby Tiger Playtime, more animals were displayed to the public, including a capuchin monkey who was tossed approximately 6 feet onto the lap of one patron. Another monkey was twirled around the licensee by her belt and leash, a lemur was allowed to jump on people, a young coatimundi was allowed to roam free across people's laps, and a young kangaroo was allowed to roam free in the event area.

Stark also received repeat citations for failure to provide flooring that could be cleaned and sterilized in the sheltered housing facilities containing three domestic dog-hybrids. He was cited for failure to clean two enclosures properly that contained five dogs, as there was an accumulation of fecal material and hair and the meat that was put in the enclosure had an accumulation of fly eggs. He was also cited for failure to have fences of sufficient height to contain big cats properly in three enclosures holding two tigers and two lions. He was cited for failure to provide four bears with a safe enclosure, as there were several

broken pieces of wooden walkway with protruding nails along the fence of the enclosure containing them. Finally, he was cited for failure to provide clean water in the pools of the enclosures holding big cats and in the enclosure holding bears. The pools were green with algae and had floating clumps of algae. There was also floating algae on the water buckets in the enclosures holding eight foxes, a cougar, and two porcupines.

**May 6, 2014:** The USDA issued Stark repeat citations for failure to provide flooring that could be cleaned and sterilized in the sheltered housing facilities containing three domestic dog-hybrids and in the room containing three dogs. He was also cited for failure to clean two enclosures properly that contained five dogs, as there was an accumulation of fecal material and hair. He was cited for failure to have fences of sufficient height to contain big cats properly in three enclosures holding three tigers and two lions and for failure to provide clean water in the pools of the enclosures holding big cats and in the enclosure holding bears. The pools were green with algae and had floating clumps of algae. Stark was also cited for failure to provide sufficient shade in six enclosures holding seven red foxes, a gray fox, a cougar, and three North American porcupines.

**January 17, 2014:** The USDA cited Stark for failure to handle animals properly. The tiger cubs used in the “Baby Tiger Playtime” event were approximately 15 to 16 weeks old. The licensee admitted that people had been scratched and nipped during the exhibitions, that he tells visitors to smack the tigers on the nose if they get too rough, and that some people don’t hit the tigers hard enough. The licensee said that if he needed to step in, he would. The inspector noted that these cubs were “too large, too strong and aggressive” and that the licensee must stop using them for direct-contact exhibitions.

**June 25, 2013:** The USDA cited Stark for failure to provide adequate veterinary care. When the purported attending veterinarian was contacted to obtain documentation of veterinary care, the veterinarian stated that he or she had previously functioned as an attending veterinarian for the facility but that the relationship had ended several years ago and he or she had not visited the facility in approximately two to three years. It was also discovered that the vet had not signed any Program of Veterinary Care forms for 2013, and it appeared that the forms had been altered. The inspector noted that “the relationship with this veterinarian was misrepresented to APHIS [Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service] Officials.” Stark was also cited for failure to provide a Great Pyrenees dog with proper veterinary care. His nose was cracked and bleeding, and the licensee stated that he had been seen by the veterinarian and was being treated—although there was no documentation of it. USDA officials also noticed acquisition records for two leopards who weren’t present. The licensee stated that within three to four weeks of their arrival, one leopard was found dead and the second was found gasping for air and the licensee euthanized him. The licensee admitted that these animals had not been examined by the attending vet at any time. Stark was also cited for failure to maintain acquisition and disposition records. There were a number of animals present whom Stark didn’t have acquisition records for, and a number of animals were missing who had no disposition records to show what had become of them. He was cited for failure to have a written environmental enhancement plan to promote the psychological well-being of the primates, failure to have written guidance from the attending veterinarian on a specific feeding plan for large felids, and failure to provide a sufficient perimeter fence to function as a secondary containment system and/or to keep unauthorized people and animals from entering the facilities. He was again cited for

failure to have fences of sufficient height to contain big cats properly in four enclosures holding seven tigers and a lion.

**May 14, 2013:** The USDA cited Stark for failure to have a responsible adult available for it to conduct an inspection of records and property.

**February 29, 2012:** The USDA cited Stark for failure to provide enclosures that would prevent the possible escape of six tigers and a lion.

**January 7, 2008:** Stark pleaded guilty to federal charges of unlawful receipt, transport, and shipping of an endangered species in interstate commerce in the course of commercial activity. He was sentenced to three years of probation and fined \$5,000. (See August 20, 2007.)

**August 20, 2007:** The U.S. Attorney's Office in the Southern District of Indiana brought charges against Stark for shipping an endangered species in the course of commercial activity, in violation of the Endangered Species Act. In or around October 2004, Stark shipped or transported an ocelot he sold to an individual in Texas.

**February 19, 2003:** The USDA cited Stark for failure to remove accumulated old fruit and parts of fruit from an enclosure and failure to clean the excessive feces accumulated around the edges of the enclosure holding the genet.

**November 13, 2002:** The USDA cited Stark for failure to supply reliable and adequate water to several pens. The water lines were broken and in need of repair.