

# The Zoo/Jungle Safari (Robert Engesser)

P.O. Box 2060, Chiefland, FL 32644

**Robert Engesser's traveling exhibit, known as The Zoo and/or Jungle Safari, has repeatedly failed to meet minimum federal standards for the care of animals used in exhibition as established in the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has cited The Zoo numerous times for failing to provide animals with proper food and water sources and adequate veterinary care, failing to provide primates with environmental enrichment, failing to maintain enclosures and transport trailers, and poor housekeeping. A leopard from The Zoo attacked a 5-year-old girl, injuring her. The exhibit has traveled under the names Engesser's Exotic Felines, Luce Enterprises, and Endangered Species, Inc., in the past. Contact PETA for documentation.**

**January 5, 2015:** The USDA cited The Zoo for failure to dispose of expired medication. One of the drugs had expired in December 2009. The inspector noted that "[u]sing expired medication for treatment is not an accepted and appropriate method of veterinary care."

**September 7, 2011:** The USDA cited The Zoo for putting the public and animals at risk by placing a young lion directly onto the laps of children. The inspector noted that in "all cases," the zoo attendant had no control over the 11-week-old lion cub and that the practice "could easily result in injury." Adults were also allowed to hold and handle the cub as well as a kangaroo and a capuchin monkey.

**July 12, 2011:** The USDA cited The Zoo for accumulations of dirt in the food storage and preparation areas, including under and around the freezers, cooler, table, and food containers.

**March 18, 2011:** The USDA cited The Zoo for using a "highly active" 16-week-old tiger cub in public photo sessions. Engesser said that he would be replacing the tiger with another. He was also cited for causing a primate psychological harm by housing a 12-year-old weeper capuchin monkey alone after her mate died. The inspector noted that the monkey had excessive hair loss and observed her biting her tail. There was no environmental enhancement plan—as required for primates—to address her neurotic and abnormal behavior. Engesser refused to sign the report.

**February 13, 2010:** A 9.5-foot-long python was stolen from The Zoo after the snake was left caged in a South Fort Myers, Florida, parking lot overnight.

**October 26, 2007:** The USDA cited The Zoo for improper handling of animals. An unvaccinated 6-week-old lion cub was being used for public photo sessions, putting the cub at risk of contracting contagious diseases.

**May 25, 2007:** The USDA cited The Zoo for failure to maintain acquisition records for a water buffalo obtained from a person who did not have a USDA license.

**July 13, 2006:** The USDA cited The Zoo for an incomplete program of veterinary care, which omitted vaccination information for two juvenile lion cubs, dosages of chemical restraint drugs for adult tigers and leopards, names and dosages of deworming medication for all animals, and any records of care for a young kangaroo. The inspector also noted that the two lion cubs being used in photo shoots would soon be too large to be safely handled during direct public contact.

**January 24, 2005:** A *Hernando Today* article about an exotic-animal auction in Florida described Pat Engesser, Robert Engesser's wife, as a big-cat breeder who had been in business for "more than 30 years." Pat Engesser said that she attended the auction with the hope of selling lion cubs to other breeders. Animals sold at such auctions often end up at canned hunts, in the "pet" trade, or at poorly run roadside zoos.

**January 1, 2005:** An advertisement placed by The Zoo in *Animal Finders' Guide*, a trade publication for exotic-animal breeders and dealers, featured lion cubs for sale and a female camel for trade, and it was seeking a male camel "broke to ride."

**January 23, 2004:** The USDA cited The Zoo for failure to have a responsible person available so that an inspection could be performed.

**May 29, 2003:** A USDA inspector recommended that The Zoo implement signage advising visitors to wash their hands after touching the animals and to provide methods for doing so. The inspector wrote, "The farm animals are of particular concern, especially the calf."

**February 27, 2003:** A USDA inspector noted that The Zoo lacked sufficient environmental enrichment for primates.

**March 1, 2002:** The USDA cited The Zoo for allowing children to come into direct contact with animals

without supervision during exhibition. For the third time, the USDA cited the facility for failing to develop and implement an environmental enrichment plan for primates. The baboon and a lemur were exhibiting stereotypic behavior.

**August 22, 2001:** During an inspection, the USDA noted that the baboon's stereotypic behavior was still not being addressed.

**May 24, 2001:** The USDA cited The Zoo for failing to offer environmental enrichment to a baboon housed alone or to the ring-tailed lemurs. The baboon was seen pacing and head-rolling. A lion cub was being fed an inadequate diet of goat milk replacer. Water containers for the camel and the llama were covered with algae.

**August 17, 2000:** The Zoo was cited for failing to give proper veterinary care to a tiger cub suffering from metabolic bone disease because of the lack of a proper diet and to a leopard with several areas of missing hair.

**June 28, 2000:** During a complaint-based inspection, the USDA cited The Zoo for failing to provide animals with adequate food.

**November 4, 1999:** The USDA cited The Zoo for failing to store food to protect against deterioration, mold, or contamination by vermin.

**April 30, 1999:** The Zoo was cited for keeping a tiger cub in a cage in which he was unable to turn about freely and make normal postural adjustments. The exhibit was again cited for failing to maintain proper veterinary records to document that an underweight elephant was receiving proper medical attention.

**January 28, 1999:** The USDA cited The Zoo for failing to provide an inclusive program of veterinary care, including measures to prevent zoonosis. A lion cub transmitted ringworm to other animals and a caretaker. The facility was also cited for failing to keep enclosures and food storage areas in good repair. A dead tiger cub was found in the freezer, having died of an unknown ("probably infectious") respiratory illness.

**July 24, 1998:** During a complaint-based inspection, the USDA cited The Zoo for failing to maintain enclosures adequate to prevent animals from escaping. The exhibitor was also cited for lack of a proper program of veterinary care.

**August 15, 1996:** A Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., official wrote to Engesser, instructing him to cease exhibiting animals at Wal-Mart and Sam's Club locations

because this was a violation of its corporate policy.

**April 24, 1996:** The USDA cited The Zoo for failing to maintain transport enclosures in good repair.

**November 7, 1995:** The Zoo was cited for improper storage of supplies, failing to maintain enclosures in good repair, and a lack of proper water sources for three leopards.

**May 20, 1995:** In a letter to the owners of The Zoo, the attending veterinarian noted observations that the big cats were overweight and stated that a leopard's tail had to be amputated.

**May 15, 1995:** The Zoo was cited for failing to maintain enclosures in order to prevent injury to animals.

**March 2, 1995:** The USDA cited The Zoo for housing goats, sheep, and llamas in enclosures in which they could not make normal postural adjustments. It was again cited for failing to offer enrichment to a baboon who was constantly pacing and picking at her skin—a sign of zoochosis. There was also no record of veterinary care, and an elephant was observed to be thin.

**October 12, 1994:** The USDA cited The Zoo for failing to store food in order to prevent contamination and to maintain transport containers in good repair.

**June 10, 1994:** The Zoo was cited for failing to store food properly to prevent contamination. The baboon was exhibiting stereotypic behavior indicative of zoochosis.

**March 8-11, 1994:** During this inspection, the USDA cited The Zoo for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair and failing to store bedding to prevent contamination. A male tiger was noted as underweight and suffering from a lame paw. The Zoo staff was not able to provide records to account for the whereabouts of all animals. Enclosures and perimeter fencing were noted to be inadequate to safely contain animals. The camel's water source was found to be filled with algae and silt.

**February 11, 1994:** The USDA cited The Zoo for failing to implement an environmental enrichment program for primates, and the lemurs did not have access to a den to which they could retreat from the public. Food was noted to be stored in a manner in which it could become contaminated, and enclosures were noted to be in disrepair.

**May 11, 1993:** The USDA cited The Zoo for housing lemurs, lions, and tigers in transport containers.

**August 9, 1990:** According to the *Rapid City Journal*, a leopard attacked and mauled a 5-year-old girl while on display at the Black Hills Motor Classic in South Dakota. Reportedly, the leopard, who was restrained with a small chain fastened to a box, leaped on the girl's back as she walked past him.