

June 21, 2021

Roswell Mayor Dennis Kintigh

Via email: roswellmayor@roswell-nm.gov

Dear Mayor Kintigh,

I'm writing on behalf of PETA to alert the city of Roswell to continuing and serious concerns relating to the management of the animals at the Spring River Park & Zoo. Three years ago, I spoke before the City Council in favor of the zoo's Master Plan, and supported the improvements Roswell city management said would be addressed that would have vastly improved the conditions and welfare of the animals at the zoo. However, after receiving photos and videos taken at the zoo this year, and reviewing zoo records recently provided in response to a public records request, it is clear that since I spoke at that meeting three years ago, conditions for animals have seriously declined. PETA is calling for the zoo to immediately halt plans to acquire additional animals, and to develop and implement a concrete plan for improving the care and conditions for the zoo's existing residents. I'd also like renew PETA's offer to donate \$10,000 toward improving care and conditions for animals at the zoo, in exchange for allowing PETA to place the zoo's two North American black bears at a sanctuary accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS).

Despite the city of Roswell adopting a progressive Master Plan to improve the poor conditions for animals at the Spring River Park & Zoo in 2018, virtually nothing of substance has been completed. What has been completed reflects poor planning and lack of knowledge regarding animals' natural history and modern animal welfare science. Animal welfare concerns that have been recently documented at the zoo include:

- The two black bears are still confined to a cramped concrete pit, which contributes to and exacerbates mobility issues due to arthritis and joint pain, among other serious welfare issues.
- The bobcat, foxes, coati, and ring-tailed lemurs remain confined to cramped, concrete floored corn crib cages.
- The mountain lion was moved to a new, mostly barren enclosure that is inadequate for the needs of the species, lacking space, opportunities to climb and hide, and environmental enrichment opportunities.
- Multiple animals have been documented with overgrown hooves, and exhibiting signs of lameness, including two aoudads, a longhorn steer, and a mini horse.
- Multiple animals showed signs of veterinary issues that appear not to be addressed properly, including two red foxes, one with hair loss and instability and weakness in the rear legs, and another with a significant limp; an underweight longhorn steer; and an overweight donkey.

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- Some enclosures had an excessive accumulation of feces and others had extremely dirty pool water, including for the beaver on two occasions and for the wolf-hybrid, who was confined to one of the concrete pits that had a pool filled with brown water, debris, and possible algal growth.
- Enclosures for raptors remain cramped and barren, preventing flight, or, for those unable to fly, space and furnishings to easily ambulate, seek shelter, and forage.
- Hoofstock enclosures lacked appropriate enrichment for climbing and exploring, and browse for foraging.
- Multiple enclosures lacked adequate shelter and visual barriers, and many lacked adequate shade, particularly for the longhorn cattle, mini horses, and donkeys.
- None of the animals had misters in the summer and few animals had any source of water for soaking and cooling themselves.

PETA reached out to Roswell City Manager, Joe Neeb, earlier this year, alerting him to these serious animal health and welfare concerns. After reviewing public records relating to veterinary and animal care at the zoo, it appears that not only has the facility failed to make promised improvements, but it has no plans to make those improvements in the foreseeable future, and has inexplicably acquired additional animals with plans to acquire even more. The records revealed that:

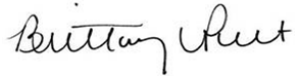
- There are no plans to move the black bears out of the antiquated concrete pit in which they are confined, nor to make any substantive improvements for their health and well-being.
- A beaver escaped from an inadequate and unsafe enclosure and was apparently never found.
- The records exposed grave veterinary concerns, including a necropsy report for a North American porcupine named Einstein who was severely underweight, indicating that he had been malnourished/emaciated prior to his death. He had rapid growth of his incisors and plant material lodged in his gut that caused a blockage, indicating dental issues likely caused by an inappropriate diet and/or husbandry practices and/or lack of appropriate veterinary care.
- Veterinary records also show that Luna, the fox who had been observed with a significant limp, is receiving medication for this issue, yet based on the severity of her non-weight bearing lameness, it does not appear her condition and pain are being properly managed and treated.
- Veterinary records also show that the attending veterinarian had suggested hoof trims for the longhorn cattle but noted that “longhorns don’t do well with anesthesia” and recommended getting a restraint device to safely trim them last October. Video taken in March showed that one of the longhorns, Geronimo, *still* had overgrown hooves, and was by then exhibiting pronounced lameness due to continued neglect. It appears that Geronimo has been at the zoo for several years, but the zoo cannot even perform a standard hoof trim, either with safe and effective sedation or anesthetic protocols that are routinely used elsewhere, a proper restraint device, and/or with positive reinforcement training to facilitate calm and safe handling of this individual. Allowing his hooves to become overgrown, which is likely causing significant pain, and not having a plan in place to properly trim them after all these years, demonstrates the zoo's inability and failure to provide even basic standards of care.

The animal welfare concerns at the Spring River Park & Zoo have long been known to city officials and must be addressed as a matter of urgency. While the city and the zoo may be experiencing resource shortages, that only underscores the absurdity of planning to bring additional animals into a facility that lacks the resources and knowledge to properly care for the animals currently in its facility.

PETA urges the city of Roswell to accept PETA's long-standing offer to donate \$10,000 toward improving conditions for animals at the facility in exchange for allowing PETA to arrange for the placement of its bears at a GFAS-accredited sanctuary, to immediately halt plans to acquire additional animals at the Spring River Park & Zoo, and to immediately develop and implement a plan to substantively improve conditions and care for animals at the facility. PETA would gladly assist the city in developing such a plan, including, but not limited to, by referring the city to experts in animal care and husbandry who could advise on these subjects.

I respectfully request a response to this letter by end of day, Thursday, June 24.

Very truly yours,



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