

# Zoological Wildlife Foundation, aka 'ZWF Miami'

16225 S.W. 172 Ave., Miami, FL 33187

**Zoological Wildlife Foundation (ZWF) (aka "ZWF Miami" and previously known as "Zoological Imports 2000 Inc.") is owned by Mario Tabraue, a former drug kingpin who has a long criminal history that includes convictions for racketeering and narcotics violations. The investigation that led to these convictions was called "Operation Cobra," in reference to Tabraue's exotic-animal business, which served as a front for his drug ring. In 1989, Tabraue was given a 100-year prison sentence, but he was released after 12 years when he became an informant. He promptly resumed his animal enterprise, even though he previously admitted to making false and inaccurate claims to federal authorities about his animal dealings.**

**ZWF has failed to meet the 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 it for failing to provide adequate veterinary care, failing to have a sufficient public barrier, failing to provide shelter from inclement weather, failing to handle animals properly, failing to provide animals with sufficient space, failing to provide potable water, failing to have complete records, failing to have a written environmental enhancement plan for primates, failing to keep enclosures in good repair, and knowingly creating fraudulent documentation and**

**information and presenting it to a USDA official. In 2016, ZWF was issued a \$1,313 penalty by the USDA for an AWA violation that led to a member of the public being injured by a tiger.**

**Contact PETA for documentation.**

**February 15, 2023:** The USDA issued two critical citations to ZWF for handling violations related to public contact with dangerous wild cats. The facility was cited for failing to handle a lion cub so that there was minimal risk of harm to the animal and the public, resulting in the cub biting a guest on the arm. ZWF also received a citation for failing to have safety barriers in place during public exhibition and failing to keep dangerous animals under the direct control and supervision of an experienced handler. In September 2022, a patron of the facility posted several photos and videos on social media showing interactions with an adult clouded leopard with no apparent handler present to control the animal. In May 2022, photos and videos on social media showed a patron who was able to get up close and place their hand against an enclosure fence of adult tigers with no safety barriers visible.

The facility was also cited for failing to clear out overgrown vegetation near the perimeter fence and chimpanzee enclosure and failing to maintain animal housing facilities in good repair. The jaguar enclosure had several wooden planks and plywood boards that were extremely damaged and rotted with many sharp wooden splinters that could injure the animals. The enclosure for the African crested porcupines had two large holes, and both porcupines were observed digging in them during the inspection.

**September 21, 2021:** The USDA issued ZWF an official warning for two alleged handling violations related to public contact with big cats that occurred on July 15, 2021:

failing to handle an animal in a way that minimized risk of harm to the animal and the public and failing to keep dangerous animals under the direct control and supervision of an experienced handler.

**July 15, 2021:** The USDA issued two critical citations to ZWF for handling violations related to public contact with big cats. The facility was cited for failing to handle a lion cub so that there was a minimal risk of harm to the animal and to the public, resulting in a guest being bitten by the cub. ZWF also received a citation for allowing the public to interact with a juvenile lion over 16 weeks of age. The inspector noted, "Handling of big cats over the age of 16 weeks poses a risk of injury to the public, and maintaining control is questionable even while tethered."

ZWF was also cited for failing to have a plan for environmental enhancement to promote the psychological wellbeing of primates available for review during the inspection. It was also noted that "the attending veterinarian was not satisfied with the facility's implementation of the current enrichment program for nonhuman primates."

The USDA also documented two "Teachable Moments." ZWF was instructed to repair or replace several damaged tiki branches and leaves used for shade as well as mesh tarps located throughout the facility's enclosures. It was also asked to remove four protruding metal screws in the two-toed sloth enclosure to prevent injury to the animals.

**November 2, 2020:** The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) issued the roadside zoo a written warning after a child was bitten by a juvenile chimpanzee named Limbani. The FWC advised ZWF to stop allowing public contact

with the 40-plus pound chimpanzee immediately.

**June 27, 2017:** A volunteer was bitten by a 9-year-old tufted capuchin. She was taken to the hospital and prescribed antibiotics. According to the volunteer, when she returned to ZWF, she was told that she could no longer volunteer at the facility because she broke protocol by leaving the property after sustaining the injury and that protocol was to call the owner.

**January 25, 2017:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to keep enclosures for primates in good repair to protect the animals and securely contain them. Metal clamps used to secure adjoining sections of the primary enclosures were deteriorating and had sharp edges.

**January 24, 2017:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to have a program of veterinary care available and for failing to keep in good repair the wooden swings in the capuchin and gibbon enclosures. The swings had become detached from the chain on one side. ZWF was also cited for failing to keep the enclosure of Zeus, a white tiger, in good repair. The stainless steel clamps holding the wire mesh to the support posts had sharp edges that could potentially injure the cat if he brushed by or jumped up on the mesh. Several other enclosures had similar clamps that also needed to be addressed.

**June 29, 2016:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to dispose of seven containers of expired medications. There was also a controlled substance not properly secured by the attending veterinarian. ZWF was also cited for concerns related to a water receptacle for the red-handed tamarins. A PVC pipe that led to the water source had blue sealant at the joint that was sloppily applied, and drips were seen in the cage. The animals had access to the dripped

sealant and could potentially ingest the chemical.

The USDA further cited ZWF for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair to reduce the risk of injury to the animals: In the sloth enclosure, a wooden perch was secured to the wire panel wall with a metal bracket that had a very sharp edge protruding into the enclosure, and a hole in the giant anteater enclosure was so deep that it passed concrete pouring along the fence line and sharp uneven concrete was exposed.

**December 11, 2015:** The USDA issued a direct citation to ZWF for failing to supply adequate veterinary care to bonnet macaques. A male macaque was observed being extremely aggressive to a female. The female appeared stressed as the male was grabbing and biting her. She had bleeding wounds on her left arm and on her face. The male had a laceration on the right lower mandibular area extending to his neck.

ZWF was also cited for failing to keep an inventory of animals and records of acquisition and disposition complete and current, failing to replace the overhead light in the sheltered housing of the three gibbons to allow for routine inspection and cleaning, and failing to provide sufficient environmental enhancement to promote the psychological wellbeing of three singly housed primates—very little enrichment was being provided. Citations were also issued for failing to address the erosion issues that left holes and sharp concrete edges around the support posts in the alpaca and camel enclosure and holes along the fence line in several areas in the enclosure containing four giant anteaters. ZWF was further cited for failing to provide a wolf with shelter from inclement weather and failing to provide a safe and effective program for “pest”

control—bait inside several bait boxes was moldy.

**July 23, 2015:** The USDA issued ZWF a citation and a penalty of \$1,313 for the incident on October 6, 2014, in which Goliath, a white tiger, bit a member of the public’s hand. Insufficient distance and/or barriers allowed the man to insert his hand into the enclosure housing two big cats. See the October 7, 2014, entry for details.

**October 7, 2014:** The USDA issued ZWF a direct citation for failing to maintain sufficient distance and/or barriers between animals and the public to ensure the safety of both. On October 6, 2014, a member of the public was able to approach and insert his hand into an enclosure holding two big cats. One of the cats, a white tiger, bit the man’s hand, causing serious injury.

According to *CBS12 News*, the person injured was a construction worker who had finished work on the site. He was transported to an area hospital for treatment.

**March 15, 2012:** The USDA cited ZWF for storing toxic substances in the animal area and feed storage areas. The facility was also cited for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. The kangaroo enclosure had two sprinklers, a damaged ground-level light, and a sewage cap that were accessible to the animals, and the wood-post entry gate did not latch securely to the outside post. The tamandua enclosure had metal slates that were too far apart, which allowed the animals’ feet to pass through.

**April 15, 2013:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to have an approved plan of environmental enhancement to promote the psychological wellbeing of primates, failing to arrange a safe enclosure for four sloths housed in the garage—an electrical cord in the enclosure was accessible to the

animals—and failing to supply potable water to a white tiger. The only source of water in the enclosure was the swimming tank.

**July 2, 2012:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to keep an up-to-date record of inventory and acquisition records for an alpaca, a gibbon, an owl monkey, and six wolves. Another citation was issued for failing to have a plan for environmental enhancement available for review. The facility was issued two separate citations for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair: The wooden resting shelf for the Celebes crested macaque was ripped apart, exposing sharp wood, and the red ruffed lemurs' enclosure had chain mesh that allowed the lemurs to stick their entire heads through.

**September 27, 2011:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. The sloth enclosure had a wooden resting surface with large nail heads protruding from it. The two indoor enclosures housing armadillos and a giant anteater had damaged walls. The walls had areas of drywall and wood missing, and doorframes were damaged.

**August 4, 2011:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to have a responsible adult available to accompany the USDA agent during the inspection.

**April 27, 2011:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to eliminate standing water between the tufted and "black/white capuchin" enclosures. The water ran the entire length of the enclosures' sides and was not the result of recent cleaning.

**December 29, 2010:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to maintain enclosures appropriately. A primary enclosure for five adult tigers was constructed of heavy-gauge chain link with 12-foot-high walls that had no kick-in or top. The USDA agent noted that

adult tigers, when appropriately motivated, can jump in excess of that height. In addition, the chain-link fence of the Ankole-Watusi, sheep, and goat enclosure was damaged. The metal support running the length of the bottom of the enclosure was damaged, and the chain link had separated from the support, creating a gap in the fence that an animal could become trapped in.

**August 11, 2010:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to have a public barrier around the lemur and two capuchin enclosures, allowing the public access during public exhibition.

**November 6, 2008:** The USDA cited ZWF for knowingly creating fraudulent documentation and presenting false information to a USDA official regarding the acquisition and disposition of two tiger cubs the facility acquired from Bhagavan Antle. The licensee presented transfer forms, which he created. He later admitted that these included false information. It was revealed that the tigers had been transported by an unlicensed carrier, and Tabraue agreed to testify in the USDA's case against the carrier to avoid adjudication for the violations, which the USDA had noted in its initial inspection of the fraudulent records could have warranted license termination.

**May 15, 2008:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to provide an adult spider monkey with adequate space in the enclosure to allow natural postural adjustments and facilitate normal locomotion for a brachiating (arm-swinging) species. The height of the enclosure was less than the 7-foot minimum requirement.

**August 14, 2007:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to have records accessible for review to ensure compliance with regulations and standards during a USDA inspection.

**November 7, 2006:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to repair areas of the perimeter fence that were damaged by a storm and were only 3 feet high instead of the required 6 feet.

**April 11, 2006:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to provide 10 animals with adequate shelter from the sun and inclement weather. The primary enclosure for the cattle, goats, and pigs had an artificial shelter that was not large enough to protect all the animals at the same time.

**October 27, 2004:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to protect stores of food from contamination. An open bag of dry exotic feline food contained a cockroach or cricket, and a dying cockroach was found in the food area.

**October 16, 2001:** The USDA cited ZWF for failing to clean excess excreta from a primate enclosure that had deteriorating wooden surfaces that could not be cleaned or sanitized; failing to construct the surfaces of enclosures with materials that could be readily cleaned and sanitized, including perches and shelves that were chewed, worn, and saturated with excreta; failing to maintain in good repair the perimeter fence, which had areas where trees and branches were leaning on or growing through it, allowing outside animals easy access to the facility; failing to dispose of leftover meat in a leopard enclosure that was placed there the day before and was brown in color, had a foul odor, and was covered with ants and flies; failing to have a safe and effective program to control excessive red ants and flies in the leopard enclosure; and failing to remove excreta from enclosures as often as necessary. Four areas in the leopard enclosure had excessive buildup of fecal waste, most of which appeared to be weeks old and deteriorating, and there was a strong odor around the enclosure. The platform was not sealed and could not be

properly cleaned or sanitized. The lion enclosure also had excessive amounts of fecal waste, causing a strong odor around the enclosure.