

Zebra Incidents

The following is a partial list of incidents involving captive zebras in the U.S. since 2000. These incidents have resulted in more than 10 injuries to humans, including a child, and the deaths of more than 15 zebras. Contact PETA for documentation.

April 28, 2024/North Bend, Washington:

Four zebras escaped when Kristine Keltgen stopped at an exit on I-90 to address an issue with the trailer they were being held in. Keltgen had been transporting them from Winlock, Washington, to her petting zoo in Anaconda, Montana. Three of the zebras were soon able to be contained in a horse pasture, and they were returned to the trailer later that day. However, Keltgen was unable to find the fourth one, named Sugar, and continued on her way to Montana the next day. Sugar remained at large for nearly six days. Multiple agencies and local residents participated in the efforts to locate her, and she was finally recaptured on May 3 so that she could be transported to Montana.

January 27, 2024/Marion, Indiana: A tractor trailer caught fire on the highway while transporting animals, including five zebras, from the Tarzan Zerbini Circus to Fort Wayne, Indiana, for performances with the Mizpah Shrine Circus. None of them were injured.

March 12, 2023/Circleville, Ohio: A 72-year-old man was hospitalized with severe injuries after being attacked by one of the zebras on his property. He had turned his back to the animal while burning brush. The attack resulted in a hemorrhage below the man's elbow and enough damage to require "a number of operations" to save his arm.

Initially, hospital officials didn't believe they would be able to save it, because "they thought that the zebra totally tore it off." When first responding to the situation, deputies tried to block the zebras from the man with their vehicle, but a "very hostile" large male zebra charged the driver's-side door. That zebra later tried to approach emergency medical staff while they were tending to the man. Deputies tried to scare him away, but their efforts failed. So the officer shot and killed the animal, with the authorization of the family. The incident report stated that the zebra was most likely "aggressive" because he was protecting the other zebras, all female.

October 7, 2021/Chicago, Illinois: Two young zebras, a male and a female, escaped from Goebbert's Pumpkin Patch and Apple Orchard after being transported there by Animal Entertainments Inc. from Wisconsin. They were spotted crossing a state highway, halting traffic, to reach an open field. Police became involved because of the close proximity to I-90 and had to block traffic multiple times to avoid potential accidents. After two hours, Goebbert's workers were able to capture both of the zebras.

August 26, 2021/Upper Marlboro, Maryland: Three zebras escaped from Jerry Holly's breeding facility. One of them was found dead weeks later in an illegal snare trap 2 feet from a fence separating a neighboring property from Holly's farm. The zebra had been "dead for long enough for [his or her] body to be 'completely decomposed' by the time county investigators were called to the scene by a third party in mid-September." A Maryland Department of Natural Resources investigator stated that "[t]he animal should have been seen or heard while [he or she] was dying from being caught in the snare if the caretaker had attended to the zebras in the fenced enclosure, and most likely died

of dehydration after a period of a few days struggling in the trap.” On September 20, 2021, the USDA issued Holly a critical citation for failing to handle the zebras “in a manner that demonstrated the licensee and staff were knowledgeable of the handling of zebras.” The remaining animals were captured and returned to Holly in December, after four months.

Holly was charged with three counts of cruelty to animals after this event. Each misdemeanor charge carries a maximum penalty of 90 days in prison or a fine of \$1,000. He is accused of “inflicting and authorizing ‘unnecessary suffering or pain on a Zebra’” and “not providing adequate shelter or food.” The complaint also references the death of a zebra who had originally been spotted on Holly’s farm by a news helicopter, along with the unaccounted loss of another zebra.

May 7, 2021/Cookeville, Tennessee: A zebra escaped from a trailer at Triple W Alternative Livestock Auction and Exotic Bird Sale. The zebra made their way onto Highway 111, where police unsuccessfully tried to recapture the animal. Officers tried to rope and even attempted to stun the zebra twice with a Taser to try to subdue the animal, who continued to evade recapture. After a three-hour chase, the zebra was cornered in a driveway and coaxed back into the trailer.

July 5, 2019/Seymour, Tennessee: Three women and a man were bitten by a zebra at Brookhaven Animal Farm within a couple of weeks. Two of the women were bitten on their arms, the third was bitten on her back, and the man was bitten on his hand. The victims’ wounds were treated at a hospital. One of the women reported that when she was trying to take a photo, the zebra “picked me up and slammed me down, and picked me up and slammed me down, and picked me up and slammed me down,” causing her

to fear for her life. Her friend had to punch the zebra in the muzzle area to get the animal to stop.

March 27, 2019/Callahan, Florida:

Shadow, a “pet” zebra, escaped and was shot by the owner. The zebra was reportedly injured during the escape and “had to be ‘put down.’” The owner did not have a valid captive wildlife license for the zebra.

January 30, 2019/Carroll County, Indiana:

A zebra froze to death after becoming trapped in a farm fence during extreme weather conditions. The extreme cold reportedly “caused cold air to crystallize in the animal’s lungs ... which eventually caused the zebra to suffer internal fatal damage.” County authorities filed a report with the prosecutor’s office and were said to be conducting an investigation into whether the incident was the result of negligence.

May 5, 2017/Wimauma, Florida: An escaped zebra slammed into a truck, breaking the truck’s side-view mirror, striking the driver with glass shards. It took the Sheriff’s Office helicopter nearly two hours to locate the zebra, who had been spotted galloping through residential yards before colliding with the truck. Employees of the zebra’s owner, Jennifer Caudill, assisted deputies and were able to recapture the animal. Caudill’s zebras had previously escaped at least twice from UniverSoul Circus. (See the March 18, 2016, entry.)

January 14, 2017/San Simeon, California:

A zebra belonging to Hearst Ranch was found dead and skinned on a nearby beach after presumably being carried down a creek and into the sea. Hearst Ranch stated that the zebra most likely died from being swept away in the creek after heavy rains. Ranch officials said that they were “quite certain” someone skinned the zebra on the beach.

July 27, 2016/Baltimore, Maryland: Trixie, a 16-year-old plains zebra, was euthanized at the Maryland Zoo. She had performed in a circus for several years while suffering from a congenital hoof issue before being transferred to the zoo at the age of 8. The zoo's head veterinarian believed that the "health concerns that Trixie faced years ago when she performed at the circus would lead to her downfall." She also stated that "[u]ltimately, [Trixie's] congenital issues were catching up with her, and her quality of life began to suffer from the long-term effects of standing with too acute of an angle on her front feet for 16 years [and] we knew the time had come to humanely euthanize her."

May 16, 2016/Catskills, New York: A 5-month-old female zebra named Zula who had escaped from Richard Myer while he was trying to board her at Bailiwick Animal Park and Riding Stables was found dead four days later in the Kaaterskill Wild Forest preserve. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation stated that she may "have fallen from a steep cliff."

March 18, 2016/Oakland, California: Two zebras escaped during a UniverSoul Circus show and ran along a major East Oakland road near the Coliseum. Circus personnel were able to herd them back. This was the second time these zebras had escaped from UniverSoul. (See the November 15, 2015, entry.)

January 1, 2016/Granbury, Texas: A zebra escaped and was found by the Hood County Sheriff's Department just south of Granbury. Deputies were able to catch the zebra, but the animal escaped and had to be caught again. The zebra was returned to the owner after a few hours.

November 15, 2015/Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Two zebras escaped from a

UniverSoul Circus show, leading police on a chase through the city. One was recaptured 20 minutes after fleeing, and the other was recaptured after a 40-minute, 2-mile chase. On November 24, 2015, the USDA cited owner Jennifer Caudill for failing to "maintain control of dangerous animals at all times to prevent injury to the zebras and the public."

May 16, 2015/Altoona, Iowa: A zebra was able to escape through an open fence gate and was seen roaming the streets. Police were able to capture the animal and offered him or her water while waiting for the owner to arrive.

April 29, 2015/Muskogee, Oklahoma: A zebra bit off a piece of a man's nipple while the man was working in the yard next door. He had to receive seven stitches and told media that the injury was "very severe" and "very traumatizing." The city told the owner that she had to find a new home for the zebra after the incident.

April 6, 2015/Jasper County, Texas: A group of zebras escaped from a farm and ran along Highway 96 for at least half an hour. Police officers were able to recapture and return the animals to their owner.

March 15, 2015/Little Rock, Arkansas: An Arkansas district judge was attacked by his father's "pet" zebra. He was hospitalized for injuries to an eye and arm.

October 2013/Cleveland, Tennessee: A zebra named Zeke escaped from Ronald Price's farm by jumping a high fence. Zeke was roaming the county for about five months before being captured and returned.

November 19, 2013/Washington, District of Columbia: Gumu, a Grévy's zebra, attacked a keeper at the National Zoo. The keeper breached zoo protocol and left gates and doors open between the zebra's stall

and the yard where they were working, allowing the zebra to attack and bite them multiple times. The keeper had to undergo surgery following the attack. During the incident, Tony, a 1-year-old Dama gazelle, became startled and ran into a barrier, fracturing a vertebra.

November 28, 2012/Staten Island, New York: Rozzy, a 4-month-old zebra, and a Shetland pony escaped from Giovanni Schirripa, a Christmas tree seller. They were spotted running along a busy road, dodging traffic, and were later returned to their owner. After this incident, Schirripa rehomed the zebra.

July 17, 2012/Quakerstown, Pennsylvania: A young zebra with the Piccadilly Circus got his jaw caught in the halter of another zebra he was playing with. His hoof eventually became stuck in the halter as well. By the time employees were able to release the animal, he had died of suffocation.

April 4, 2012/Topeka, Kansas: A trooper spotted an escaped zebra on the shoulder of I-70 west of Topeka. The owner was able to coax the zebra back to his pen using treats.

October 15, 2011/Boston, Massachusetts: A mother Grévy's zebra and her foal escaped their exhibit at Franklin Park Zoo, forcing an evacuation of the zoo. It was stated that the foal broke through the electrical fencing and the mother followed. The foal returned to the exhibit after 40 minutes, and the mother was led back to the barn mid-afternoon.

January 12, 2011/San Simeon, California: Three zebras who had escaped from Hearst Ranch a week prior were shot and killed by two ranchers 10 miles away from the facility. One neighbor who gunned down two of the zebras said that the animals "have no

respect for fences ... [t]hey tear down fences and go right through them." The Hearst Ranch owner said that "[zebras] have some respect for a fence. But if they want to move, they'll hop the fence."

November 20, 2010/Locust Grove, Georgia: Evidence, a nearly 3-year-old zebra who had been found along I-75 as a foal (see the April 8, 2008, entry), died on the way to a veterinarian. That morning, Evidence's behavior had started to change. He stopped playing and stood alone on the far side of his habitat. He was loaded into a trailer for transport to the veterinarian at Auburn University in Alabama, and upon arrival, he was found dead. A necropsy determined that a stent in his shattered urethra had "failed, causing a backup of urine in his blood, resulting in a system-wide infection throughout his body."

August 16, 2010/Carmichael, California: Two zebras were able to escape Michael Mustangi's animal-training farm when being loaded into a truck for transport to Oregon. They were found roaming the streets of a nearby neighborhood. One of the zebras was bleeding after being hit by a car. A neighbor was able to rope off an area to temporarily confine the zebra. The second zebra was found in a swimming pool at an apartment complex.

July 10, 2010/Dallas, Texas: A 1.5-year-old male zebra at the Dallas Zoo died after becoming startled in a holding pen, running into a wall, and breaking his neck. He had been transferred to the zoo on July 8 and was placed into the holding pen temporarily before being allowed access to the main exhibit.

March 19, 2010/Athens, Georgia: Lima, a 12-year-old zebra with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, was euthanized because of injuries sustained in an escape incident. (See the February 18, 2010, entry.)

His injuries were not initially believed to be severe, but when sent to the University of Georgia for treatment, he was found to have a fractured foot and tissue death. Several weeks of treatment were unsuccessful, and the circus decided to euthanize him.

February 18, 2010/Atlanta, Georgia: Lima, a 12-year-old zebra, became startled and escaped from Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus before a show. Lima led trainers and police on a 40-minute chase through downtown and down I-75 during rush-hour traffic, covering well over a mile. Police cruisers blocked off all southbound lanes and were able to herd Lima over to the right shoulder and off an entrance ramp, where his trainer was able to recapture him. His long run apparently caused cuts on his hooves. He had escaped on at least two other occasions. (See the March 20, 2008, entry.) On February 19, 2010, the USDA issued Feld Entertainment Inc. a direct citation for failing to maintain housing facilities in structurally sound and good repair to protect animals from injury and prevent them from escaping. An inspector noted “that the area where the [zebra] bolted into the temporary fencing was not adequately secured to the permanent fencing.”

July 22, 2009/Lawrence, Kansas: Joe Windscheffel, a college football player, was bitten and dragged by a zebra on a farm where he was working. The zebra became aggressive, charged, and bit Windscheffel’s arm. Two other workers had to free the arm from the zebra’s grip. The bite resulted in a compound fracture that required a plate and six pins and caused him to miss the entire 2009 season.

April 9, 2009/Little Rock, Arkansas: A female zebra was euthanized at the Little Rock Zoo after running head-first into a service area gate and collapsing. She and another zebra had become “excited” while

being moved to a new exhibit and began running around, breaking through a fence and hot wire. One of the zebras then began to run back and forth in the service area and ran into the gate. A veterinarian determined that she had broken her neck and decided to euthanize her because she would not recover from the injury.

April 8, 2008/Jackson, Georgia: A 3-month-old zebra, later named Evidence, was found injured and grazing along I-75. Authorities stated that the zebra had fallen from a truck and been struck by a car, causing a crushed pelvis, nerve damage, and soft tissue injuries. Noah’s Ark in Locust Grove, Georgia, took in Evidence. He underwent extensive surgery to repair his pelvic injuries and also had to have a stent placed to repair his shattered urethra.

March 20, 2008/Baltimore, Maryland: Zebras Mali, Giza, and Lima escaped from Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. They ran out an open door and into traffic downtown before being captured. The same three zebras had previously escaped from the circus’s handlers less than a year earlier. (See the June 15, 2007, entry.) On April 10, 2008, the USDA cited Feld Entertainment Inc. for failing to handling animals in a manner that eliminated the potential to cause injury and undue stress.

December 31, 2007/North Fort Meyers, Florida: A 6-month-old zebra named Ann Curry from the Shell Factory and Nature Park jumped out of a trailer while being transported. She traveled “from yard to yard” after exiting the trailer. An animal control officer stated that the zebra had injured her mouth—possibly from a fall—was limping, and had abrasions and lacerations when found later that day.

June 15, 2007/Colorado Springs, Colorado: Four zebras and three horses escaped from Ringling Bros. and Barnum &

Bailey Circus at the World Arena. The animals were being walked from the parking lot corral to the arena when noise from I-25 apparently startled the zebras, causing them to run and the horses to follow. Fifteen animal handlers chased them for about half an hour until a driver parked sideways across the road, blocking the animals' path and allowing them to be recaptured.

January 25, 2007/Seattle, Washington: A 4-year-old zebra named Zina died at the Woodland Park Zoo after running into a fence and breaking her neck in a holding pen.

January 31, 2005/Norfolk, Virginia: Zeke, a 4-year-old Grant's zebra at the Virginia Zoo, escaped and entered a lion exhibit. By the time staff members arrived, the lion, Kalisa, and Zeke were in separate corners, but Kalisa was wet and muddy and Zeke had several claw marks. Kalisa was tranquilized to allow staff members to lead Zeke out of the exhibit.

October 15, 2004/Norfolk, Virginia: Officials at the Virginia Zoo believed that Zeke, a 4-year-old Grant's zebra, chased a 32-year-old white rhino into a moat, where the rhino drowned.

March 25, 2001/Sequim, Washington: A zebra at the Olympic Game Farm, a drive-through "safari" park, bit a 3-year-old child, causing an inch-deep gash in his arm. The child was feeding animals from the family's truck when the zebra bit and grabbed him. The zebra pulled him out of the truck's window and dragged him across the ground a few feet away before his mother's boyfriend pried open the zebra's jaws to free him. Staff at the park offered a Band-Aid and did not know the location of the nearest hospital. The wound required 10 stitches.

April 2000/Sequim, Washington: A zebra at the Olympic Game Farm bit a woman's arm when she tried to offer bread while going through the drive-through "safari" park. The bite broke the woman's skin and she was bleeding, but staff at the park apparently did not know what to do and did not know the location of the nearest hospital.