

January 6, 2023

Timothy Jennings  
Mayor of Roswell, New Mexico

Via email: [mayortimjennings@roswell-nm.gov](mailto:mayortimjennings@roswell-nm.gov)

**Re: Recent Deaths of Four Animals at Spring River Zoo**

Dear Mayor Jennings:

I am writing to follow up PETA's March 14, 2022, letter sounding the alarm about Spring River Zoo's substandard facilities, which have been found to violate the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). In light of the recent deaths of Vinny, Cash, Bugsy, and Barbie—the Barbary sheep and wallaby who were killed when dogs breached the facility's perimeter fences last week, and the roadside zoo's abysmal history of animal care, PETA is calling on the city of Roswell to close the roadside zoo once and for all and to retire the animals to reputable facilities. Spring River Zoo has repeatedly shown that it cannot provide appropriate care to the animals in its facility, and PETA urges you to shut it down before yet another major incident makes headlines.

**Five animals were killed as the result of inadequate fencing and housing facilities at Spring River Zoo in 2022.** The facility's history of animal escapes and deaths due to inadequate facilities is abysmal and unprecedented in the United States:

- **July 28, 2022:** The USDA issued Spring River Zoo a critical, repeat citation when a female elk was euthanized after suffering irreparable injuries caused by a missing section of paneling in the primary enclosure. The female elk and a male elk passed through the opening created by the missing panel, where the female elk's left hind leg became ensnared and shattered.<sup>1</sup> The USDA had previously cited Spring River Zoo for a fifteen-foot section of fencing in the elk holding area that was "loose and curled upward and inward, creating an "~8-10 gap underneath and causing the fencing material to protrude into the interior of that holding enclosure by several inches."<sup>2</sup>
- **July 7, 2021:** A female black bear being held at Spring River Zoo escaped her enclosure "by pulling aside a layer of chain link material on the roof of the enclosure[.]" The USDA issued the facility a critical citation for the incident, finding that "[t]he former design and construction of the enclosure was inadequate to contain the bear" and

<sup>1</sup> See USDA Inspection Report (July 28, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> USDA Inspection Report (July 15, 2021).

PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS  
FOUNDATION

Washington  
1536 16th St. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-483-PETA

Los Angeles  
2154 W. Sunset Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90026  
323-644-PETA

Norfolk  
501 Front St.  
Norfolk, VA 23510  
757-622-PETA

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“could have resulted in harm to the animal, other animals, or even people.”<sup>3</sup>

- **October 10, 2020:** A beaver escaped Spring River Zoo when he was being held in an enclosure that did not have dig barriers, thereby allowing him to dig under two chain-link fences and a picket fence. The beaver was never found. The USDA issued a critical citation for the incident.<sup>4</sup>
- **March 27, 2014:** The USDA issued Spring River a critical citation after a bear cub escaped an enclosure and climbed on top of the enclosure’s roof. An employee had overfilled the moat surrounding the enclosure, enabling the bear cub to swim across.<sup>5</sup>

Spring River Zoo has an additional laundry list of recent animal welfare citations for issues relating to veterinary care, sanitation, and animal welfare.

The deaths of four animals last week evidence the Spring River Zoo’s inability to ensure that the animals are afforded proper care and protection, as required by law. Given the facility’s long history of endangering animals and the public through its improper animal care and insufficient facilities, PETA urges you to close the roadside zoo now and transfer the remaining animals to reputable facilities before Spring River Zoo’s ever-growing body count climbs even higher.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours,



Anna Whistler  
Counsel, Captive Animal Law Enforcement

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CC: Roswell City Council

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<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> USDA Inspection Report (Apr. 7, 2014) (issued Apr. 10, 2014).