

Mini ‘S’ Exotic Zoo

3050 FM 1799, Mineola, TX 75773

Mini “S” Exotic Zoo, aka “Conservation & Advocacy for Rare & Endangered Species” (C.A.R.E.S.), operated by Michelle Smith, has failed to meet minimum standards for the care of animals used in exhibition as established by the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has cited the facility for repeatedly failing to provide animals with adequate veterinary care, repeatedly failing to clean primate enclosures, repeatedly failing to maintain enclosures in good repair, failing to obtain animals from licensed dealers, and failing to have an adequate number of knowledgeable staff. In 2023, the USDA issued Mini “S” Exotic Zoo an official warning for failing to handle a marmoset in a way that didn’t cause trauma or injury. The marmoset was released from an enclosure and was then electrocuted by a rattrap, resulting in the death of the animal.

Contact PETA for documentation.

June 20, 2023: The USDA cited Mini “S” Exotic Zoo for failing to provide animals with adequate veterinary care. Trixie, a lemur, was “expelling yellowish, extreme[ly] loose stool.” Loose stool was also observed on top of the housing unit in the enclosure. A gibbon enclosure had dark brown, dried loose stool on a braided hose enrichment item. Madee, a gibbon, was “expelling a reddish brown loose stool” in another enclosure. The facility hadn’t contacted the attending veterinarian.

May 18, 2023: The USDA issued Mini “S” Exotic Zoo an official warning for failing to handle animals in a way that didn’t cause

trauma or injury, which resulted in the death of a marmoset. (See the entry for April 6, 2023, for more details.)

May 16, 2023: The USDA issued Mini “S” Exotic Zoo a critical citation for acquiring two infant spider monkeys from an unlicensed dealer. A repeat citation was issued for failing to clean primate enclosures adequately. A capuchin enclosure had multiple small piles of feces and swings that were coated with dirt and grime. A lemur enclosure had a resting place with several areas of dried feces and an air-conditioning unit with a buildup of grime. Another repeat citation was issued for failing to maintain the fennec fox and bat-eared fox enclosures in good repair. Both enclosures had multiple areas that were missing wire at the bottom of the walls, which left sharp points. The USDA cited the facility for failing to provide two owl monkeys with environmental enrichment while in a “holding enclosure” for 18 hours. The enclosure had only one small limb with three branches and no perches, hiding places, or other environmental enrichment items. A citation was also issued for failing to clean the refrigerator in a food prep area.

April 6, 2023: The USDA issued Mini “S” Exotic Zoo a critical citation for failing to handle animals in a way that didn’t cause trauma or injury. On March 24, 2022, a marmoset was let out of their enclosure and electrocuted in a rattrap, resulting in the death of the animal. A repeat citation was issued for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to animals, including the following:

- **A springhaas** had a large amount of hair loss over her entire body and was wobbly when she stood on her back legs.
- **A cotton-top tamarin** had no hair on 4 inches of their tail.

- **A female fennec fox** had hair loss on her back, with focal areas of increased redness or scabs.
- **A male fennec fox** had hair loss on his right back leg.
- **A pair of red ruffed lemurs** had a large amount of loose stool in their enclosure.
- **A sand cat** had mild discharge from her eyes and minor hair loss on her nose.

Another repeat citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. The fallow deer enclosure had an otter pool with a 1-foot-long tear in its cover. The animal was observed walking on the pool cover. A crab-eating raccoon enclosure had an electrical cord hanging down from the back of the housing unit.

The USDA cited the facility for failing to have an appropriate number of adequately trained staff caring for the primates. The inspector noted a decrease in the level of husbandry practices, a lack of adequate handling, and a lack of training or knowledge of primates during inspection. Another citation was issued for failing to maintain a lemur enclosure in good repair. A plastic-type housing unit had about 6 inches of a heating cord exposed and easily reachable by the lemurs. A citation was also issued for failing to provide marmosets and tamarins with adequate enclosure space. The cages for the animals were 2-square-foot birdcages, most of which contained two animals. The inspector noted that the minimum space requirement for two marmosets or two tamarins would be 3.2 square feet. A citation was issued for failing to clean an owl monkey enclosure. A buildup of waste material in the drain tray underneath the floor was attracting flies. A lemur enclosure had at least five areas with wet piles of loose feces, old food, and other waste on the mulch floor. Another citation was issued for failing to have an adequate fly-control program in the owl monkey enclosure.

The facility was cited for failing to have disposition records for 15 different animals. A citation was issued for failing to provide heat in an outdoor sloth enclosure, where the ambient temperature was approximately 58 degrees. The USDA cited the facility for failing to clean enclosures. A springhaas enclosure was covered with pellets, cracked corn, feces, dirty PVC pipe, and food. No area was completely clean to walk without stepping or sitting in some of the material. There was a light brown, crusty substance on a tamandua enclosure's front gate, wire panel, and tubing. A citation was also issued for failing to keep the facility clean of trash and debris. Retaining walls made of hay bales in the kangaroo enclosure had deteriorated, exposing hay bale string, and a metal clamp and blanket were on the ground in front of a barn door. Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to have adequate fly- and bird-control programs. Flies were in, on, and near the tamandua, springhaas, and armadillo enclosures. A bat-eared fox enclosure had bird feces scattered across the fence and floor.

July 26, 2021: The USDA issued Mini "S" Exotic Zoo a repeat citation for failing to follow the attending veterinarian's instructions for the indoor marmoset building. On July 12, 2021, the attending veterinarian's records stated that temperature, humidity, and ventilation needed to be addressed. During inspection, humidity levels were still below the target range of 57% to 65% and there was no plan for improving ventilation other than moving six marmosets to another building.

January 27, 2020: The USDA cited Mini "S" Exotic Zoo for failing to contact the attending veterinarian before tranquilizing a male capuchin. The attending veterinarian had instructed the licensee to contact them when any sedation was necessary at the facility.