

Bear Country U.S.A.

13820 U.S.-16, Rapid City, SD 57702

Bear Country U.S.A. is owned and operated by siblings Mike Casey, John Casey, and Shannon Ballard (née Casey). Available public reports show that since 1995, it has failed to meet the 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 numerous violations, including but not limited to repeatedly failing to clean large accumulations or layers of excreta from enclosures, repeatedly failing to maintain enclosures in good repair, repeatedly failing to provide adequate shelter from inclement weather, repeatedly failing to dispose of expired medication, and failing to handle bear cubs in a way that didn't cause trauma, physical harm, discomfort, or behavioral stress. In 2006, Bear Country U.S.A. pleaded guilty to illegally purchasing two grizzly bears in violation of federal law and received criminal penalties of more than \$24,000, while the facility's then-owners, Kevin Casey and Brendan Casey, pleaded guilty to illegally selling bear gall bladders in interstate commerce and received criminal penalties of more than \$28,000. In 2023, a facility representative admitted that employees had used fireworks to separate mother bears from their cubs and animal care staff were recorded recommending that bear cubs be handled in an aggressive manner, including by "pinching their noses," "holding their muzzles," and "kicking or pushing them away."

Contact PETA for documentation.

August 10, 2023: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to handle bears in a manner that didn't cause trauma, physical harm, discomfort, or behavioral stress. A facility representative admitted to the inspector that while removing bear cubs from their mothers, employees had used fireworks to scare mother bears away from dens so that staff could remove the cubs. The facility representative also confirmed that animal care staff had been recorded recommending handling bear cubs in an aggressive and inappropriate manner, such as by "holding their muzzles," "pinching their noses," and "kicking or pushing them away." The video showed a staff member pushing away with their foot and scruffing bear cubs to keep them from climbing or grabbing the staff member's legs. Another citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. On May 5, 2023, a lynx was found outside an enclosure in the morning when staff arrived. On June 13, 2023, another lynx was missing from the same enclosure. The animal was found later that evening under a deck.

October 14, 2018: Two 75-pound bear cubs escaped from Bear Country U.S.A. and were found wandering through a residential neighborhood. A Pennington County sheriff's deputy responded until Bear Country workers arrived to sedate and retrieve the animals.

June 10, 2011: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to house cougars in structurally sound enclosures. The primary cougar enclosure wasn't structurally sufficient to contain nine cougars of their age and agility and created a risk that they could climb or jump over the fencing.

September 14, 2010: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to dispose of expired medications and medical supplies.

October 4, 2006: In federal court, Bear Country U.S.A. pleaded guilty to illegally purchasing two grizzly bears, resulting in criminal penalties of more than \$24,000, and then-owners Kevin and Brendan Casey pleaded guilty to two counts of illegally selling bear gall bladders, resulting in criminal penalties of more than \$28,000. In June 2001, the Caseys sold 54.9 ounces of bear gall bladder in interstate commerce from South Dakota to Alaska. Again, in August 2001, the Caseys sold 29.6 ounces of bear gall bladder in interstate commerce from South Dakota to Alaska. In March 2003, Bear Country U.S.A. illegally purchased and transported two grizzly bears in interstate commerce from Minnesota to South Dakota. Court documents showed that between 1999 and 2001, the Caseys sold 44 paws, 12 pounds of meat, and nearly 16 pounds of gall bladders from bears.

December 1, 2004: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to dispose of expired medication in the veterinary clinic refrigerator. Another citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. A reindeer enclosure and a bear enclosure had exposed sharp wire points, and a bear shelter had exposed rebar on it that posed a risk of injury to the animals.

February 4, 2004: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. A tin wrap used to protect a large tree was being torn from the bottom, causing it to become detached, and wire was torn up near a gate. A citation was also issued for failing to have an adequate perimeter fence. The exit gate was not the required 8 feet.

July 16, 2003: The USDA issued Bear Country U.S.A. a repeat citation for failing to have an adequate perimeter fence. The perimeter fence wasn't the required 8 feet and wasn't continuous, and an animal holding area had no perimeter fence. A

citation was issued for failing to have an adequate veterinary care program. The last recorded visit by the attending veterinarian was in June 2001. A citation was also issued for failing to dispose of expired drugs in the veterinary room. Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. A bear enclosure had a torn-out section of chain-link fence on the ground, exposing sharp wire points. Another bear enclosure had a shelter with a sharp strip of metal torn away that was sticking straight up, and the pen for young bears had a section of exposed chain link on the ground that the bears could become entangled in.

February 4, 2003: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to provide adequate shelter from inclement weather at the main drive-through site. The cougar and coyote shelters needed additional bedding. A citation was also issued for failing to store several bags of feed in leak-proof containers at the drive-through site. Another citation was issued for failing to feed the animals in a way that didn't contaminate the food at the holding facility. Pelleted feed was placed on a concrete floor among accumulations of feces, causing the two to become mixed. Both locations were cited for failing to clean accumulations of excreta. At the drive-through park, a strong ammonia odor emanated from the otter enclosure. At the holding facility, a bear barn had accumulations of feces covering the floor. Another citation for both locations was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. At the drive-through park, enclosure fences had been pushed down by falling trees in multiple areas, causing them to become loose, and an arctic wolf enclosure had sharp wire points exposed. At the holding facility, a bear enclosure had sharp wire points exposed and the tin on a bear building had been blown loose. Lastly, a citation for both locations was issued for failing to have an adequate perimeter fence. At the drive-through park, areas around the

entrance and exit gates weren't the required height. At the holding facility, the perimeter fence had been pushed down below the required height by fallen trees.

August 21, 2002: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to maintain adequate inventory and disposition records, specifically finding that Bear Country U.S.A. needed to note all animals who had been sold, dead or alive, and all animals who had been taken to slaughter. Both locations were cited for failing to clean accumulations of excreta. At the main drive-through site, large accumulations of feces covered the ground in the shelter of the baby bear enclosure. At the holding facility, accumulations of feces covered the floor of two indoor bear shelters. Both locations were also cited for failing to have an adequate perimeter fence. The drive-through site didn't have a complete fence at the entrance or exit. Lastly, both locations were cited for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. The drive-through had exposed sharp wire points in multiple bear enclosures and needed a complete perimeter fence. The holding facility had sharp rusted tin exposed, and a bear barn had a 6-foot area of tin torn off the roof by high winds.

March 19, 2002, "Holding Facility": The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to clean accumulations of excreta. Outside enclosures were "wet and sloppy due to the melting of snow and frozen feces & urine," and a bear barn had accumulations of mud and feces covering the floor several inches deep that was beginning to melt. Another citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. A bear barn had sharp wire points exposed, and another barn had a loose center cap on the roof that was being blown off by the wind.

March 19, 2002: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to dispose of

expired drugs from their veterinary clinic's fridge.

June 26, 2001, "Holding Facility": The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to clean accumulations of feces and bones in a bear barn.

June 26, 2001: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to remove all outdated drugs.

December 13, 2000, "Holding Facility": The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to clean 10- to 12-inch accumulations of frozen feces in the bear building or provide clean bedding to protect animals from inclement weather.

December 13, 2000: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to protect rabbit carcasses used for feed appropriately in the freezer.

August 23, 2000, "Holding Facility": The USDA issued Bear Country U.S.A. a direct repeat citation for failing to clean large accumulations of feces and soiled bedding, some of it molding, in shelters and outside enclosures for 150 bears. A citation was issued for failing to have an adequate fly control program. Another citation was issued for failing to store rotting, molding, and spoiled fruit and vegetables in the refrigerator to prevent spoilage.

August 23, 2000: The USDA issued Bear Country U.S.A. a repeat citation for failing to maintain the premises. Tall weeds were in and around enclosures, and supplies were stored around bobcat enclosures. A citation was also issued for failing to have an adequate veterinary care program. The veterinary care plan hadn't been reviewed and signed by the attending veterinarian in the last year and a half. The facility also had not disposed of expired drugs.

June 27, 2000, “Holding Facility”: The USDA issued Bear Country U.S.A. a direct citation for failing to clean “v[e]ry large accumulations of feces in all bear barns” and an outdoor enclosure. A citation was also issued for failing to maintain the premises. Tall weeds were present along a bear barn.

June 27, 2000: The USDA issued Bear Country U.S.A. a direct citation for failing to provide adequate shelter from inclement weather. The coyote pup and wolf pup enclosures were too small to provide the required shelter space for all animals. Another direct citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. Bear and arctic wolf enclosures had sharp wire points exposed. A citation was issued for failing to have the veterinary care plan reviewed and signed by the attending veterinarian. Another citation was issued for failing to maintain the premises. Tall grass, weeds, and supplies were around enclosures.

November 2, 1999, “Holding Facility”: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to clean accumulations of feces in a bear barn.

November 2, 1999: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. Bear, bobcat, and lynx enclosures had exposed wire. A citation was issued for failing to clean accumulations of feces in a lynx enclosure. A citation was also issued for failing to cover all meat and storing a mountain goat carcass in a food freezer.

February 2, 1999, “Holding Facility”: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. A bear barn had sharp tin exposed and a section of a buffalo enclosure along a road needed to be repaired.

February 2, 1999: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. The bobcat enclosure had a broken brace that held the top wire up, and a roll of wire was loose in the bighorn sheep enclosure. A citation was issued for failing to clean accumulations of feces in the bobcat, lynx, and fox enclosures. A citation was also issued for failing to have an up-to-date veterinary care plan. The last update had been in November 1996.

August 18, 1998, “Holding Facility”: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. A tree had fallen on the fencing of a buffalo enclosure, and buffalo were pushing old logs through the bottom of the fencing. Another citation was issued for failing to maintain an adequate fly control program in the bear pens, where a large number of flies were present.

August 18, 1998: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to store food appropriately. Quarters of horse and beef were stored uncovered, and a mountain goat lamb carcass was stored in the food freezer. A citation was also issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. A shelter in a bear enclosure had been torn apart, exposing sharp tin.

July 30, 1997: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to provide veterinary care to an elk with a lump on the bottom of her jaw. A citation was issued for failing to provide shade to bears. Another citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. An arctic wolf enclosure had dug-out holes near the fence, a bear and goat enclosure both had wire points exposed, and posts in the bobcat enclosure needed to be repaired. Another citation was issued for failing to have an adequate solid public barrier. Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to clean the premises. There were spilled feed,

overgrown weeds, and multiple areas that needed to be cleaned up.

October 16, 1996: The USDA issued Bear Country U.S.A. a direct repeat citation for failing to provide adequate shelter from inclement weather. The beaver, badger, skunk, fox, wolf, bear, and coyote enclosures didn't have shelters large enough to hold all the animals. A citation was also issued for failing to provide these animals with adequate space to allow for normal postural movements when all of them were in the shelters. Another direct repeat citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. The bobcat, lynx, and coyote enclosures had torn wire with points exposed. The facility was cited for failing to have the attending veterinarian check on a limping reindeer and sign new veterinary care forms and for failing to clean accumulations of feces in a skunk enclosure. Another citation was issued for failing to store food in a way that minimized the risk of contamination. The food storage area needed to be cleaned of discarded material and trash. A dead coyote carcass was also stored in the food freezer. Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to have adequate acquisition and disposition paperwork for all animals.

August 27, 1996, "Holding Facility": The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. Multiple enclosures had sharp wire points exposed and loose tin shelter material, and an entry gate needed to be reinstalled. A citation was issued for failing to have adequate fly and mice control programs. Another citation was issued for failing to use up-to-date veterinary care forms.

August 27, 1996: The USDA issued Bear Country U.S.A. a direct citation for failing to provide adequate shelter from inclement weather. Bear cubs and wolf pups didn't have large enough shelters, and enclosures for the wolves weren't adequately draining,

which allowed standing water to accumulate. Another direct citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. The bobcat, lynx, bear, and arctic wolf enclosures all had torn or loose wire with points exposed. A citation was issued for failing to maintain a transport trailer in good repair. Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to use up-to-date veterinary care forms.

November 29, 1995, "Holding Facility": The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to clean wet, soiled bedding from a bear barn and a shelter. Another citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. A round steel shelter had points of panel exposed, another shelter had a section of wall torn away, and the buffalo calf enclosure had two nails protruding into it.

November 28, 1995: The USDA issued Bear Country U.S.A. a direct repeat citation for failing to provide adequate shelter from inclement weather. Multiple enclosures didn't have bedding for animals or enough shelter for all animals to be protected. A repeat citation was issued for failing to store meat appropriately. Meat used for food was stored uncovered and with a bighorn sheep carcass in the same freezer. A citation was also issued for failing to have complete disposition and acquisition records for all animals.

August 23, 1995, "Holding Facility": The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to maintain an adequate fly control program.

August 22, 1995: The USDA issued Bear Country U.S.A. a direct citation for failing to provide arctic wolf pups with a large enough shelter to protect them all from inclement weather. Another direct citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. The bighorn sheep, bobcat, and lynx enclosures all had sharp points exposed. The facility was cited for failing to provide

animals with potable water. The beaver pond was murky and green. Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to store meat appropriately. Quarters of meat had been left uncovered, and the facility was storing animal carcasses and parts in the same food freezer.

February 8, 1995: The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. The wolf, bobcat, and lynx enclosures had exposed wire, a bear enclosure had a panel that was sticking out of the ground, and the bighorn sheep shelter had loose tin. A citation was also issued for failing to provide animals with adequate shelter from inclement weather. Hay bales being used as a barrier in a red fox enclosure needed to be replaced, and a silver fox enclosure wasn't large enough to provide shelter to all the animals.

February 7, 1995, "Holding Facility": The USDA cited Bear Country U.S.A. for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. Bears had dug out sharp tin along the bottom of a bear barn, discarded tin and pipe were stored in the barn, and the gate to the elk pen was bent, exposing a sharp pipe.