

# Action Wildlife Foundation Inc.

337 Torrington Rd., Goshen, CT 06756

**Action Wildlife Foundation Inc. (Action Wildlife), owned by James Mazzarelli, has failed to meet the minimum standards for the care of animals used in exhibition as established in the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has cited Action Wildlife for using gunshot as a method of euthanasia, failing to provide animals with pain relief or anesthesia during or after surgical castration, and failing to separate incompatible animals, resulting in animal injuries and deaths. Action Wildlife has also been cited for repeatedly failing to maintain enclosures in good repair, repeatedly failing to have an adequate perimeter fence, repeatedly failing to have methods to remove water from enclosures rapidly, and failing to provide potable water. In 2012, the USDA filed a formal complaint against Action Wildlife for over 15 alleged violations of the AWA that had occurred from 2007 to 2009. In 2013, the agency issued Action Wildlife a 60-day license suspension and assessed a civil penalty of \$30,000 for willfully violating the AWA.**

**Contact PETA for documentation.**

**December 17, 2021:** The USDA cited Action Wildlife for failing to maintain an elk enclosure in good repair. The feeder was broken on one side, with jagged wire entangled in the supports.

**August 30, 2021:** The USDA issued Action Wildlife a repeat citation for failing to maintain the following enclosures in good repair.

- **Drive-through safari:** Wire used to protect an apple tree inside the enclosure had fallen onto the ground and into a pile. Multiple areas were sagging with unstable fencing, and a tree was leaning on a section of it. A lean-to used as a shelter for animals had collapsing support beams, making the structure unstable.
- **Sheep enclosure:** The shelter was in disrepair, with a broken 4-foot-by-4-foot support beam on the ground along with a plywood section of the wall.
- **Wild boar enclosure:** Scrap metal and a ladder were on the ground.

The USDA also cited Action Wildlife for failing to provide potable water to the wild boars, who only had access to a large mud puddle in one corner of the enclosure. One of them was in the puddle.

**June 1, 2021:** The USDA cited Action Wildlife for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. In 2020, a male elk was found to have wire wrapped around his antlers and required sedation for its removal. A red deer enclosure also had fencing that had come loose from the support beams, exposing broken, jagged edges.

**November 4, 2015:** The USDA cited Action Wildlife for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. Fencing in between a white-tailed deer's stall and a male goat's stall had broken, jagged edges.

**July 29, 2013:** The USDA issued a decision and an order in response to the April 6, 2012, complaint that the agency had filed against Action Wildlife. The facility was issued a 60-day license suspension, assessed a civil penalty of \$30,000, and ordered to make improvements in order to comply with the AWA.

**April 6, 2012:** The USDA filed a formal complaint against Action Wildlife for over 15

alleged violations of the AWA that had occurred from 2007 to 2009.

**April 4, 2012:** The USDA cited Action Wildlife for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. The petting zoo had a loosened ceiling panel that could have fallen.

**October 26, 2010:** The USDA issued Action Wildlife a repeat citation for failing to maintain the following enclosures in good repair:

- **Cow/mini donkey enclosure:** had a hole at the bottom of the primary fencing large enough for a cow to poke their head/horns through it.
- **Cow enclosure:** Had loose cable and coiled fencing on the ground.
- **Fallow deer enclosure:** Had loose fencing with protruding wire prongs around the trunk of a tree.

Another repeat citation was issued for failing to have an adequate perimeter fence. Gates used to create a perimeter were often left open, and there was a gap between the bottom of the fence in the alpaca/mini-horse enclosure that was “sufficient in size to allow the entry of unwanted animals.” The USDA also cited Action Wildlife for failing to have an adequate program to control the “very noticeable population of flies” that was swarming at the entrance of the petting zoo.

**September 1, 2010:** The USDA cited Action Wildlife for failing to have a responsible adult available to accompany officials for access and inspection of records and property.

**March 29, 2010:** The USDA issued Action Wildlife a repeat citation for failing to have an adequate perimeter fence. Gates used to create a perimeter were often left open. A citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. Five areas needed repairs for various issues, including a pig enclosure with a loose section of

fencing, and the feeding sheds in “Safari Land” had collapsed wooden walls.

A citation was issued for failing to have a suitable method to eliminate excess water rapidly. The Scottish highlander/aoudad enclosure had a water bucket located in a poorly drained area, forcing animals to stand in water while drinking. The pot-bellied/Yorkshire pig enclosure had only a small dry area near the shed, and the Russian boar enclosure’s only dry spot was in the shed. A citation was issued for failing to feed the Russian boars in a way that avoided contamination. The three boars were fed by “simply tossing the grain over the wall onto a rock slab.” The inspector notes that “[t]his method demonstrates poor husbandry and is likely to lead to the feed being contaminated and the animals becoming ill.” The USDA also cited Action Wildlife for failing to have a sufficient number of adequately trained employees, noting that during the offseason, only two employees worked at the facility for just 25 hours per week to care for 245 regulated animals and “large numbers” of unregulated animals.

**February 17, 2010:** The USDA cited Action Wildlife for failing to have a responsible adult available to accompany officials for access and inspection of records and property.

**November 4, 2009:** The USDA issued Action Wildlife a repeat citation for failing to provide animals with adequate shelter from inclement weather. Six elk had only one shelter, and six red deer had one shelter. A repeat citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. Sixteen areas needed repairs for various issues, including deteriorated shelter wood, broken welds that had poked holes in fencing, shelters with missing roof shingles, and small wire mesh that had detached from supports, creating jagged edges. Another

repeat citation was issued for failing to have an adequate perimeter fence.

Action Wildlife was cited for failing to establish an adequate program of veterinary care that included a form of euthanasia recommended by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). At least two animals, a pot-bellied pig and an elk, were euthanized via gunshot for having “difficulty giving birth.” The USDA cited Action Wildlife for failing to have appropriate methods of veterinary care and daily observation of the animals. During inspection, a fainting goat and two other goats were seen limping. A citation was also issued for failing to have appropriate methods of veterinary care that include pre-procedural and post-procedural care. Two pigs had been castrated but weren’t given analgesics or anesthetics during or after the procedures.

A citation was issued for failing to have a suitable method to eliminate excess water rapidly. The zebu’s water tub was surrounded by a large area of standing water and mud because staff had emptied the tub to refill it. The substrate in and around the elk shelter was approximately 6 to 8 inches deep in mud and water. The entire shelter was filled with pooling water, rendering the shelter unusable. An elk walked through the mud with great difficulty, sinking in it approximately 3 to 4 inches. A citation was also issued for failing to remove excreta from enclosures. The pygmy goat wood shelter had an accumulation of soiled substrate on the right side, and approximately 2 to 3 feet of soiled substrate was present in a wood shelter in the “Ibex Mtn” enclosure. Another citation was issued for failing to keep the premises clean. A few rolls of small wire mesh were present along a fence line.

**June 3, 2009:** The USDA issued Action Wildlife a repeat citation for failing to separate incompatible animals. In February, a year-old elk was found dead in his pen

and an old male elk was found dead after having been injured by a younger male elk. A repeat citation was issued for failing to provide animals with adequate shelter from inclement weather. Seven elk had only one shelter, and 24 red deer/fallow deer didn’t have sufficient shelters throughout their pens.

Another repeat citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. Nineteen areas needed repairs for various issues, including fencing that had been pulled up, exposed screws, bowed shelter panels, fence posts that leaned out of the enclosure, and general shelter deterioration. A final repeat citation was issued for failing to have an adequate perimeter fence. On February 3, 2009, an unknown predator was able to gain access to the Peking ducks’ enclosure and injure them, resulting in puncture wounds. There were also gaps under the gate near the bison pen and to the left of the gate.

The USDA cited Action Wildlife for failing to have appropriate methods of veterinary care and daily observation of the animals. Two ibex goats who had just given birth and were nursing appeared to be very thin and had rough coats. A citation was also issued for failing to handle animals so that the risk of harm to them and the public was minimized. Two ferrets had been placed in wire mesh enclosures on the upper floor of the new museum without any public barriers.

**February 2, 2009:** The USDA issued Action Wildlife a repeat citation for failing to provide animals with adequate shelter from inclement weather. Eight elk were held in a single shelter, five red deer shared one shelter, and two large male red deer were housed together. A repeat citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. Seven areas needed repairs for various issues, including fencing detached from support posts, exposed jagged edges,

gates or posts beginning to lean into enclosures, bent fencing allowing animals to reach a restricted pond, and a shelter with broken boards and missing roof shingles. The USDA also issued a repeat citation for failing to have an adequate perimeter fence.

Action Wildlife was cited for failing to establish an adequate program of veterinary care that included an AVMA recommended form of euthanasia. An injured alpaca and a sick elk were euthanized via gunshot. At least two other elk and some Scottish highlander cows were also euthanized via gunshot, and their meat was served at a game dinner function.

A citation was issued for failing to house compatible animals together. A young red deer had sustained a wound on the shoulder inflicted by a male red deer that required sutures. Other red deer had been killed by male red deer on November 3 and October 6, 2008. An elk died from being attacked by a male elk in December 2008. The inspector noted that it's "apparent that the management of these large Cervidae during the rut season is not being appropriately addressed." A citation was issued for failing to have a suitable method to eliminate excess water rapidly. The shelter for the Scottish highlanders, yak, Dexter cow, and belted Galloway had an accumulation of mud and manure on the substrate. A citation was also issued for failing to keep the premises clean. A roll of small wire mesh was within the aoudad/sheep/goat pen.

**August 19, 2008:** The USDA issued Action Wildlife a repeat citation for failing to provide animals with adequate shelter from inclement weather. Seven red deer, including a large male, had just one shelter. Eleven elk were kept in one enclosure with one shelter. The inspector noted that only one large male was in the shelter at the time of inspection and that there wasn't enough room for another 10 animals. Another

repeat citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. Ten areas were noted to need repairs for various issues, including trees with excessive amounts of wire mesh wrapped around the trunks, exposed jagged edges, loose fence cables, a shelter with missing soil that created gaps between the ground and the base of the walls, and another shelter that was beginning to bow outward. The USDA issued a repeat citation for failing to have an adequate perimeter fence.

Action Wildlife was cited for failing to have both appropriate methods of veterinary care and daily observations of animals. During inspection, a young elk was found to have crusted diarrhea under the tail and was "very thin, [with a] spotty hair coat compared to the other elk in the pen." Expired medications were also found in the washroom of the barn. A citation was issued for failing to be able to produce records for inspection. The staff member present was able to locate only a few records but not the main set of records or daily logs.

A citation was issued for housing a rabbit with four pot-bellied piglets. A citation was issued for failing to store three open bags of food in closed containers. Another citation was issued for failing to have a suitable method to eliminate excess water rapidly. Excess mud and feces had accumulated in front of and inside the elk shelter. When an elk entered, flies swarmed around the animal. The shelter for the nilgai/oryx/aoudad/Scottish highlander enclosure had an accumulation of mud and feces. The Russian boar enclosure also had a "mud wallow present in the front, right corner," which had an accumulation of algae.

Another citation was issued for failing to keep water receptacles clean. The reindeer, bison, elk, red deer, fallow deer, nilgai/oryx/aoudad/highlander, mouflon, goat/sheep/aoudad, Scottish highlander,

Jacob sheep/highlander/yak/ostrich, and zebra/goat enclosures all needed a thorough cleaning. "All tubs had some degree of algae growth and dirt present." A citation was also issued for failing to keep the premises clean. The elk pen had an old shelter with loose shingles on the roof and ground. Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to have a sufficient number of adequately trained employees. The inspector wrote, "Due to the number of noncompliant items noted on this inspection more employees need to be hired, or the few that are employed, need to be instructed on the USDA standards and regulations. At this time ~270 animals are cared for by two full time staff members and at least one student that was hired for the summer. Due to the fact that this inspection report was 6 pages long, it is apparent that more staff is needed to maintain this facility."

**July 10, 2008:** The USDA cited Action Wildlife for failing to have a responsible adult available to accompany officials for access and inspection of records and the property.

**January 8, 2008:** The USDA issued Action Wildlife a repeat citation for failing to provide animals with adequate shelter from inclement weather. The Russian boar enclosure, including the shelter, was excessively muddy. Nine elk had only one wood-sided shelter, which wasn't large enough to protect them all from inclement weather. The inspector noted "that this facility is not maintaining the sheds/shelters on a routine basis."

Another repeat citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. Seven areas were noted to need repairs for various issues, including sagging or detached fencing, damaged or missing shelter siding, and a shelter with missing shingles on the roof that exposed sharp points.

The USDA cited Action Wildlife for failing to observe animals daily to assess their health and well-being. During a review of records, it was noted that animals had been found dead on the property. A Scottish highlander was found dead in a pond, a young white-tailed deer was found dead after a round of treatment for an upper respiratory condition, and a female elk was found dead while giving birth. No documentation stated that the situations had been discussed with the attending veterinarian. The inspector noted that there "appears to be a lack of communication with the attending veterinarian regarding the health issues of the animals on this premise[s]."

Action Wildlife was also cited for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized risk of harm to the animals and public. The barrier fence in front of the Russian boars' pit-type enclosure had been taken down and not reinstalled. The USDA also cited Action Wildlife for failing to have an adequate perimeter fence. Six gates had been installed to create a perimeter, but some of them were often left open. The inspector noted that with the gates open, "the animals [had] direct access to run up the property roadways, through the parking lot(s), and onto RT 4."

Fencing along the property was also found to be in "total disrepair," with cables sagging in some places and disconnected from poles in others. The "Safari Land" area housing sika deer, fallow deer, white-tailed deer, alpacas, and sheep needed a perimeter fence. The primary fence in that area had a history of being in disrepair, and predators had been able to enter the enclosure on October 23, 2002. One sika deer had been able to escape from the area through an open gate in October 2007, and a dog had entered the facility on November 10, 2007, and injured a Shetland pony.