

Mt. Hope Auction

8076 OH-241, Mount Hope, OH 44660

Mt. Hope Auction, operated by Thurman and Chester Mullet, holds auctions for various U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) licensees to sell or consign animals to during the Mid Ohio Alternative Bird and Animal Sale, held three times a year. The facility and exhibitors, breeders, and dealers who attend the auctions have failed to meet minimum standards for the care of animals as established in the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The USDA has cited Mt. Hope Auction for, among other things, repeatedly accepting animals for consignment from unlicensed individuals, repeatedly failing to handle animals in a way that minimized risk of harm, repeatedly failing to have identifiable attendants present during all public interactions, and repeatedly failing to transport rabbits, birds, and other small mammals in structurally sound carriers with accessible openings, projecting rims, space for normal postural movements, and handholds. On January 6, 2023, the USDA issued Mt. Hope Auction an official warning for multiple alleged violations of the AWA. In September 2022, the facility failed to observe all animals daily, which resulted in the death of a ram without the facility's knowledge. It also failed to maintain enclosures in good repair, which allowed a stressed deer to become trapped between a wall and a gate. In October 2022, the facility knowingly accepted animals for consignment from six unlicensed individuals.

Contact PETA for documentation.

July 22, 2024: The USDA issued Mt. Hope Auction a repeat citation for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. Over 70 enclosures were found to have excessive wear due to chewing, broken boards, metal posts with sharp edges, holes in the walls, exposed nails, and flaking coatings. A citation was issued for failing to clean enclosures. Over 30 of them were found to have a thick, brown/black accumulation of excreta on various areas, including gates and wall boards. A citation was also issued for failing to clean the premises and maintain them in good repair. Ten enclosures were found to have numerous cobwebs, dust, and debris on the upper walls and ceiling. The inspector noted that the cobwebs were "thick and covered with dust and dirt."

A critical repeat citation was issued for knowingly accepting nearly 90 animals for sale from unlicensed individuals. Lastly, a repeat citation was issued for failing to have complete records. Acquisition and disposition records for more than 55 consignments were missing various types of license information.

March 21, 2024: The USDA cited Tiny Tails Mini Farm at Mt. Hope Auction for failing to transport seven hedgehogs in safe containers with a lid or with the required ventilation openings.

March 21, 2024: The USDA cited Leroy Yoder at Mt. Hope Auction for consigning four muntjacs to the auction without a valid USDA license.

March 21, 2024: The USDA cited David Miller at Mt. Hope Auction for transporting 18 hedgehogs in carriers with ventilation openings equivalent to only 1.5% of the total surface area of the sides when the requirement is for 32% of the total surface area.

March 20, 2024: The USDA issued Mt. Hope Auction a repeat citation for failing to handle animals as expeditiously and carefully as possible. During the sale, an employee grabbed an adult kangaroo by the tail, spinning the animal around. The kangaroo was seen struggling to escape from his grip, repeatedly jumping and pawing at the loose substrate in the sales ring.

A repeat citation was issued for failing to have adequate barriers to keep members of the public from touching animals. Visitors were seen touching an “anxious zebra,” a dromedary camel, a large male bison who “violently struck” the gate with his head, and an ostrich. No facility employees or public barriers were present in these areas.

Another repeat citation was issued for failing to have readily identifiable employees present during interactions with the public. The USDA cited Mt. Hope Auction for housing incompatible animals together. The inspector observed three dromedary camels housed in adjacent enclosures who were able to interact in negative ways and a zebra who paced back and forth more rapidly when an adult camel attempted to interact with the animal through the fencing.

A citation was also issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. The enclosure confining the “anxious zebra” had a hole in the fencing, through which the zebra could poke their head into the adjacent enclosure. During the inspection, the zebra’s halter got caught on the fencing. In addition, a nilgai enclosure had a broken board with a splintered end, and there were holes in the walls of a calf enclosure.

A critical repeat citation was issued for knowingly accepting animals for sale from an unlicensed individual. Lastly, three repeat citations were issued for failing to transport animals in enclosures with projecting rims, with the words “Live Animal”

on the sides, or with enough space for the animals to make normal postural movements.

February 12, 2024: The USDA issued Mt. Hope Auction a critical citation for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to 42 animals during both the September 14 to 16, 2023, and the November 2 to 4, 2023, sales. Animals were found pacing back and forth in enclosures; emaciated with prominent ribs, scapula, and pelvic bones; lying on their sternum with their nose pressed into enclosure bedding; and with diarrhea adhering to their hind regions, ocular discharge, nasal discharge, feather and hair loss, and dry, scaly skin.

A critical repeat citation was issued for accepting nearly 90 animals from unlicensed individuals during both sales. During the September event, while USDA inspectors were present, the auction denied an unlicensed consigner trying to sell three foxes. Later that day, after the inspectors had left, the auction accepted the same individual’s animals for consignment.

A repeat citation was also issued for failing to have complete records during both sales. At least 100 consignor records were found to be missing USDA license numbers or vehicle and driver’s license numbers. In addition, disposition records were not complete, missing USDA licenses and indications of the sex and approximate age of the animals.

November 2–4, 2023: The USDA issued Mt. Hope Auction a direct citation for failing to handle animals in a way that didn’t cause physical harm or behavioral stress. Two pairs of bar-headed geese were observed to be exhibiting signs of stress in the animal intake area, which had a constant flow of people. Two of the geese erratically swayed and lunged at the wire sides of the enclosure, causing their beaks to become trapped and resulting in wounds that

actively bled onto the enclosure and the animals' plumage. The veterinary care team wasn't aware of the situation until the inspector notified them. Another direct citation was issued for failing to house the geese in carriers that safely contained the birds.

The USDA issued a repeat citation for failing to transport rabbits in safe carriers with adequate handholds and projecting rims for ventilation. Approximately 50% of the cages didn't comply with these requirements, including two carriers that had bent or broken wires, causing sharp points to project into them.

A citation was issued for failing to transport rabbits in carriers with adequate space to turn around freely and make normal postural adjustments. A rabbit was observed trying to move to the front of an enclosure. The animal fell into the water and was unable to move past other animals. Mt. Hope was also cited for failing to transport birds in carriers with handholds or easily accessible openings or that were marked "Live Animal." Additionally, some enclosures lacked solid bottoms to prevent fecal contamination and birds stuck their heads out of others. A citation was issued for failing to transport chickens in carriers with adequate space to turn around freely and make normal postural adjustments.

November 2, 2023: The USDA cited Living Treasures Animal Park at Mt. Hope Auction for failing to transport rabbits in carriers with easily accessible openings, handholds, or projecting rims for ventilation. Another citation was issued for failing to transport African crested porcupines in a carrier with easily accessible openings, handholds, or projecting rims for ventilation.

November 2, 2023: The USDA cited Workhorse Farm at Mt. Hope Auction for failing to transport ringtails, hyraxes, and an African crested porcupine in carriers with

adequate handholds or projecting rims for ventilation.

September 14–16, 2023: The USDA issued Mt. Hope Auction a direct citation for failing to identify a calf who was unable to stand up and had been lying down with their back legs splayed out since the day before. The veterinarian claimed that he didn't have the authority to treat the animal, who was then taken to a trailer and transported off-site without receiving medical care. A direct citation was issued for failing to provide rabbits, including lactating mothers with kits, with adequate water and food. Rabbits were observed to be without water, and when provided with it, they exhibited signs of extreme thirst, drinking ravenously for prolonged periods, including one for over four minutes continuously. A female rabbit with seven kits was observed to be restless and hungry. The rabbits tried to reach a half-eaten carrot next to their cage and when provided with it, they ravenously ate it, pushing each other out of the way. The kits continued to lick the bars of the cage where the carrot had been. On the following day, rabbits had empty or no water bowls. When provided with water, some pushed others out of the way and continuously drank for prolonged periods up to five minutes.

A repeat citation was issued for failing to have adequate barriers to keep members of the public from touching animals. Visitors were seen touching rabbits, skunks, a capuchin, a kinkajou, and a fox. Sporadically situated employees didn't stop the interactions. A repeat citation was issued for failing to transport rabbits in carriers with adequate handholds or projecting rims for ventilation—approximately 90% of the cages didn't comply with these requirements. Another repeat citation was issued for failing to transport chinchillas, foxes, hedgehogs, and an opossum in carriers with adequate handholds and projecting rims. Three foxes didn't even have adequate space to turn

around. The USDA also cited Mt. Hope for transporting a capuchin, an infant lemur, and an infant squirrel monkey in carriers with openings wide enough to allow the animals to reach outside them. Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to transport birds in secure carriers that allowed removal safely. A pigeon escaped, a pheasant was observed in the rafters of the barn, and numerous birds stuck their heads or tails out of the carriers.

September 14, 2023: The USDA cited Zootastic Park at Mt. Hope Auction in Ohio for transporting squirrel monkeys and a marmoset in carriers with openings wide enough to allow the animals to reach outside them. Another citation was issued for failing to mark the primate carriers with “Live Animal” and arrows indicating the upright position. A citation was also issued for failing to transport sugar gliders and an African crested porcupine in carriers with adequate handholds or projecting rims for ventilation. Another citation was issued for failing to mark these carriers with “Live Animal” and arrows indicating the upright position. Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to mark the guinea pig transport carriers with “Live Animal” and arrows indicating the upright position.

September 15, 2023: The USDA cited Robert Sabulsky for consigning a fox, opossums, and skunks to Mt. Hope Auction without a USDA license. Upon arrival, he was told that he’d need a license and receive a citation if he proceeded. He chose to consign the animals anyway.

September 15, 2023: The USDA cited Michelle Iddings at Mt. Hope Auction for transporting a capuchin in a carrier made of wire with openings large enough to allow the monkey to reach outside it. A citation was also issued for failing to have handles on the carrier. Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to have projecting rims for ventilation on the capuchin carrier.

September 15, 2023: The USDA cited Doug Horn at Mt. Hope Auction for transporting a juvenile ring-tailed lemur in a carrier with openings wide enough to allow the animal to reach outside it.

September 14, 2023: The USDA cited Tiny Tails Mini Farm at Mt. Hope Auction for failing to transport a pig in a carrier with projecting rims for ventilation.

September 14, 2023: The USDA cited Theodore Willis of South Carolina at Mt. Hope Auction for failing to transport two-toed sloths in carriers with projecting rims for ventilation.

September 14, 2023: The USDA cited Taylor’s Wild Enterprises from New York at Mt. Hope Auction for failing to mark a macaw transport carrier with “Live Animal” and arrows indicating the upright position.

September 14, 2023: The USDA cited Saginaw Tropical Animals from Michigan at Mt. Hope Auction for failing to handle animals in a way that didn’t cause behavioral stress or physical harm. During a sale, the facility owner removed a bat-eared fox from the carrier. The USDA said that “the animal was struggling while being held and appeared to be stressed by the noisy environment.” The facility owner dropped the fox while attempting to put them back in the carrier. A citation was issued for failing to mark black-eared marmoset transport carriers with “Live Animal” and arrows indicating the upright position. A citation was also issued for failing to transport otters in carriers with adequate ventilation. Another citation was issued for failing to mark the otter carriers with “Live Animal” and arrows indicating the upright position.

September 14, 2023: The USDA cited Lupa Game Farm from Massachusetts at Mt. Hope Auction for failing to transport red foxes and ferrets in carriers with projecting rims for ventilation. A citation was also

issued for failing to mark the carriers with “Live Animal” and arrows indicating the upright position.

September 14, 2023: The USDA cited Joseph Cali for consigning five flying squirrels to Mt. Hope Auction without a USDA license. Upon arrival, he was told that he would need a license and would receive a citation if he proceeded. He chose to consign the animals anyway.

September 14, 2023: The USDA cited Jim Simpson of North Carolina for failing to transport a capybara in a carrier with projecting rims for ventilation.

September 14, 2023: The USDA cited Jacob Limings for consigning two foxes to Mt. Hope Auction without a USDA license.

September 14, 2023: The USDA cited Eli Troyer for consigning six opossums to Mt. Hope Auction without a USDA license.

September 14, 2023: The USDA cited Hovatter’s Wildlife Zoo from West Virginia at Mt. Hope Auction for failing to transport coatimundi, coyotes, and crested porcupines in carriers with projecting rims for ventilation.

September 14, 2023: The USDA cited Best Exotics from Texas at Mt. Hope Auction for failing to transport sugar gliders, hedgehogs, degus, and armadillos in structurally sound enclosures with projecting rims and adequate handholds. Another citation was issued for failing to transport 51 quail in carriers with handholds. A citation was also issued for failing to transport the birds in carriers with projecting rims for ventilation.

September 14, 2023: The USDA cited Bee City Zoo from South Carolina at Mt. Hope Auction for failing to mark kangaroo and kinkajou transport carriers with “Live

Animals” and arrows indicating the upright position.

July 3, 2023: The USDA cited Chris DeGasperi and Mikayla Pursley for conducting regulated activity without valid USDA licenses and for falsifying information related to exotic-animal sales. Records showed that they both consigned animals to Mt. Hope Auction under fraudulent licenses. On September 16, 2022, DeGasperi sold an African crested porcupine at the auction under a number not associated with a valid license, and on November 3, 2022, Pursley sold two of these porcupines and a Flemish giant rabbit under a different number not associated with any valid license.

April 20, 2023: The USDA issued Mt. Hope Auction a critical repeat citation for knowingly accepting 13 animals from six unlicensed individuals, including one who had previously illegally sold animals at the September 2022 auction (see the October 21, 2022, entry below) and another who had sold a ring-tailed lemur under another person’s license in an attempt to circumvent licensing requirements. A repeat citation was issued for failing to have all required information on sales and disposition forms, including USDA license numbers and the sex and age of animals.

April 20, 2023: The USDA cited Craig Kokas for transporting two red foxes for consignment at Mt. Hope Auction from March 23 to 25, 2023, in a carrier that was just a large section of wire mesh in a dome shape with no easily accessible openings. A citation was also issued for failing to mark the carrier with “Live Animals” and arrows indicating the upright position.

March 23, 2023: The USDA issued Mt. Hope Auction a repeat citation for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized risk of harm to them and the public. During the auction, members of the public were observed walking into a holding area

containing caged, potentially dangerous animals, including skunks, raccoons, foxes, and bobcats. In addition to the public's nearness to enclosures and direct contact with skunks and foxes, the inspector noted that "the animals inside the cages were acting very stressed by the proximity of the public." Foxes circled in repetitive patterns, raccoons rocked back and forth repetitively against the far side of a cage as people leaned over them, and a bobcat vocalized loudly, unable to get away from a visitor who had leaned down toward them. A repeat citation was also issued for failing to have readily identifiable attendants observing all public interactions with animals. Employees were in the areas of interaction but failed to notice or stop people from crossing under a rope barrier to touch a lemur or observe members of the public in the dangerous animal area, where they could easily put their hands on cages and were seen touching skunks and foxes.

A repeat citation was issued for failing to transport rabbits in structurally sound enclosures with easily accessible openings, projecting rims, and adequate handholds—approximately 90% of the cages didn't comply with these requirements. Sharp broken wires were observed in several of the rabbit enclosures. A repeat citation was also issued for failing to mark the carriers with "Live Animals" and arrows indicating the upright position. A citation was issued for failing to transport rabbits in carriers with adequate space to turn around freely and make normal postural adjustments. Multiple rabbits were observed in carriers in which they couldn't stand up or turn around freely or didn't have sufficient space to make normal postural adjustments. A repeat citation was also issued for inappropriately stacking several rabbit carriers three to four high and tightly packed together on large wagons.

A repeat citation was issued for transporting ring-tailed lemurs and a squirrel monkey in

carriers with openings large enough for the primates to extend their hands and arms outside of them. A repeat citation was issued for failing to transport small mammals, including degus, foxes, crested porcupines, skunks, bobcats, and raccoons, in carriers with accessible openings, projecting rims, and adequate handholds—approximately 50% of the cages didn't comply with these requirements. Another repeat citation was issued for failing to mark small mammal transport carriers with "Live Animals" and arrows indicating the upright position. A repeat citation was issued for failing to transport animals in carriers with adequate space to turn around freely and make normal postural adjustments. A kangaroo and a wallaby had been placed in carriers too small for them to stand up in a normal upright position, forcing them to remain hunched down. A red fox was in a carrier that didn't allow the animal to stand up in a normal posture, and a porcupine didn't have enough space to turn about freely. A repeat citation was issued for failing to transport guinea pigs and hamsters in carriers that had easily accessible openings, projecting rims, and adequate handholds—approximately 50% of the cages didn't comply with these requirements. A repeat citation was also issued for failing to mark guinea pig and hamster transport carriers with "Live Animal" and arrows indicating the upright position. Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to address the needs of a Patagonian cavy who was soaking wet, as was the bedding in his carrier. A facility representative said that the cavy was wet because it was raining outside and no one was attending to the animal's needs.

January 6, 2023: The USDA issued Mt. Hope Auction an official warning for three alleged violations of the AWA. On October 21, 2022, the facility knowingly accepted various animals for consignment from seven unlicensed individuals. On September 15, 2022, the facility failed to conduct adequate

daily observations of all animals. During the inspection, a dead ram was found, and staff were unaware of the animal's condition. They had also failed to maintain enclosures in good repair, which resulted in a deer's leg becoming trapped between a gate and an enclosure wall. (See entries below for more details.)

November 3, 2022: The USDA issued Mt. Hope Auction a repeat citation for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized risk of harm to them and the public. During the auction, members of the public were observed walking into a holding area containing caged, potentially dangerous animals, including skunks, raccoons, foxes, kinkajou, and porcupines. Some were observed attempting to touch the animals, and facility employees weren't present to deter the interactions. Mt. Hope was also issued a repeat citation for failing to have readily identifiable attendants present during public interactions with animals. Members of the public were seen petting a dromedary camel and small mammals with no facility employees nearby. A repeat citation was issued for failing to transport rabbits in structurally sound carriers with easily accessible openings, projecting rims, and adequate handholds. At least 10 rabbits had been placed in lightweight laundry baskets with wire coverings. When these containers were stacked, they buckled and broke at various points, leading to the escape of two rabbits during the auction. A repeat citation was also issued for inappropriately stacking three or four rabbit containers on top of each other while tightly packed together on large wagons. A few were tilted to the point of almost falling over, and eight were stacked with heavy wooden ones on top of lightweight plastic ones. A repeat citation was issued for failing to transport small mammals, including degus, spiny mice, skunks, and coyotes, in carriers with accessible openings, projecting rims, and adequate handholds. A citation was issued for transporting two squirrel monkeys in

carriers with openings large enough for one of the primates to reach out and pull off a sticker on the side of the carrier. Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to transport animals in carriers with adequate space to turn around freely and make normal postural adjustments. A porcupine was in a carrier so small that whenever the animal lay down, their head touched one end while their quills protruded from the other. The wire container for a fox wasn't large enough for the animal to be able to stand or lie down normally, as their body touched all sides of it.

October 21, 2022: The USDA issued Mt. Hope Auction a critical citation for knowingly accepting a total of 26 animals from seven unlicensed individuals for the September 15 to 17 auction, including foxes from a seller who had previously been identified to the auction as not having a valid license. A citation was also issued for failing to maintain records that fully and correctly disclosed all required information for each animal consigned—approximately 90% of the 1,000 records were missing one or more of the requirements, including the birth dates of animals, information about distinctive markings, consignment dates, and the USDA license numbers of consigners.

September 15, 2022: The USDA issued Mt. Hope Auction a critical citation for failing to observe the health of animals daily. A small white hornless ram was found dead by inspectors in the main sale building. Staff were unaware of the animal's condition when notified. A direct citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. During the inspection, a white-tailed deer appeared stressed and was seen darting around the enclosure. When she jumped into a corner of the wooden stall, she slid down and her front leg became trapped in the gap where the gate latched to the wall. She then started thrashing, pulling, and twisting her body, trying to free her leg.

No staff members were present, causing the inspector to have to dislodge her leg before further injury occurred. A repeat citation was issued for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized risk of harm to them and the public. During the auction, members of the public were observed walking into a holding area containing caged, potentially dangerous animals, including skunks, raccoons, foxes, kinkajous, and coyotes. Some were observed attempting to touch the animals, and no facility employees were present to deter the interactions. In another barn, members of the public were observed touching and hugging a mature dromedary camel while no employees were present. Mt. Hope was also cited for failing to have readily identifiable attendants present during public interactions with the animals.

The USDA also cited Mt. Hope for failing to transport rabbits in structurally sound carriers with easily accessible openings, projecting rims, and adequate handholds—approximately 95% of the cages didn't comply with these requirements. Three carriers had sharp, broken wires in them. A citation was issued for failing to mark the carriers for 192 rabbits with "Live Animal" and arrows indicating the upright position. A citation was also issued for failing to stack rabbit carriers appropriately in order to avoid decreased ventilation and damage to the structures. Rabbit carriers were stacked three to four high and tightly packed on a large wagon. Another citation was issued for failing to transport small mammals, including degus, spiny mice, skunks, and coyotes, in carriers with accessible openings, projecting rims, and adequate handholds—approximately 50% of the cages didn't comply with these requirements. A citation was also issued for failing to mark transport carriers for small mammals with "Live Animals" and arrows indicating the upright position. Another citation was issued for failing to transport guinea pigs and hamsters in carriers that had easily accessible openings—

approximately 50% of the cages didn't comply with these requirements, projecting rims, and adequate handholds. Yet another citation was issued for failing to mark guinea pig and hamster carriers with "Live Animal" and arrows indicating the upright position.

Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to house animals in transport carriers that were clean and had solid bottoms. Sugar gliders had been put in carriers without solid bottoms or pans to collect waste. The carriers had then been placed on racks with bars, which allowed for any spilled feed, water, or feces to fall on and into the carriers underneath. A wire chinchilla carrier had an excessive accumulation of excreta, and there was little room for the chinchillas to move without walking in waste. A wire carrier for an African crested porcupine had wood shavings completely soaked in excreta and water waste.

October 12, 2016: The USDA issued Troy Carrocce a repeat citation for continuing to sell camels without a USDA license. A citation was also issued for lying to Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service officials about his license application. On January 29, 2016, Carrocce had applied for a USDA license. However, on or around March 15, he had stated that he wasn't ready for the license process. On March 30, he called the USDA to say that he would be ready soon but was too busy from April 1 to 3. In early May, while reviewing records, an inspector found that Carrocce had sold three camels at Mt. Hope Auction on April 2, during the same weekend that he had stated he was too busy for a pre-license inspection. Another document showed that two camels had been sold to a licensee. Carrocce claimed that the animals were there on "breeder loan," but the licensee confirmed that it was, in fact, a sale. The inspector noted, "Making untrue statements and not being forthcoming concerning business practices make it impossible to effectively regulate the facility."

May 3, 2016: The USDA cited Mt. Hope Auction for acquiring two zebras and six camels on April 1 and 2, 2016, from people without USDA licenses.

May 3, 2016: The USDA issued Troy Carrocce a repeat citation for selling three camels at Mt. Hope Auction on April 2, 2016, without a USDA license.

April 27, 2016: The USDA cited Aaron Yoder for selling a camel to Mt. Hope Auction on April 1, 2016, without a USDA license.

September 19, 2014: The USDA cited Mt. Hope Auction for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized the risk of harm to them and the public. During the auction, members of the public were observed ignoring posted danger signs, opening secondary fences, and placing fingers into the cages of a fox and a raccoon. A citation was also issued for failing to have readily available attendants observing all public interactions with the animals. Another citation was issued for failing to house rabbits in containers strong enough to withstand the normal rigors of transport. Lastly, a citation was issued for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. Several stalls housing sheep and goats had holes in the wooden side walls, and one had broken wires exposing sharp edges pointing into the enclosure. Another enclosure wall had come loose from the bottom support and was leaning into the enclosure.

June 7, 2013: The USDA cited Mt. Hope Auction for acquiring a coatimundi on April 5, 2013, from a person without a USDA license.