

## Montgomery Zoo

2301 Coliseum Pkwy, Montgomery, AL 36110

**Montgomery Zoo has failed to meet 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 Montgomery Zoo for failing to provide adequate veterinary care; repeatedly failing to provide animals with safe enclosures, resulting in escapes and deaths, and a keeper being bitten multiple times by a red river hog; failing to maintain enclosures in good repair; failing to handle animals properly resulting in an employee being bitten; failing to efficiently clean enclosures which resulted in the deaths of two monkeys from suspected systemic toxoplasmosis, a disease most likely associated with environmental contamination; failing to maintain the correct chemical levels in a semiaquatic mammals' enclosure; failing to provide animals safe water sources; failing to separate incompatible animals leading to a male hippo's lameness; failing to properly transport an animal, leading to the escape of a parrot; failing to provide sufficient heating and cooling; failing to have an effective method to rapidly eliminate water from enclosures; failing to provide sufficient shelter; failing to properly store food; failing to have an effective pest control program to reduce the risk of contamination; failing to have an effective barrier to prevent contact between animals and the public; and failing to have a sufficient number of adequately trained employees. In 2022, Montgomery Zoo received an official warning from the USDA for the death of Santiago, a cheetah, who died after consuming parts of a lunch box and its contents that had been dropped into his**

enclosure by a member of the public. In 2014, the USDA issued Montgomery Zoo a \$8,107 penalty for alleged violations that occurred between 2011 and 2014.

### Documentation available upon request

**April 29, 2025:** The USDA issued Montgomery Zoo two repeat citations. The first was for failing to maintain the correct chlorine levels in the North American river otter enclosure, resulting in the two inhabitants having dull hair coats, areas of patchy hair loss, and alopecia. The water quality records noted total chlorine values ranging from 1 to 1.5 parts per million (ppm), dating back to December 2024. According to the attending veterinarian, the levels should be no greater than 0.5 ppm for North American river otters.

The second repeat citation was for Montgomery Zoo failing to provide primary enclosures that restrict other animals from entering the enclosure. Two wild starlings were observed in the blue-and-gold macaws' enclosure, risking the transmission of disease, parasites, and pests to the captive birds.

**January 29, 2025:** The USDA issued Montgomery Zoo three repeat citations. The first was for failing to keep an enclosure housing a turkey vulture in good repair, to protect the bird from injury, and restrict other animals from entering. The enclosure netting had an approximately 4" x 3" hole.

The second repeat citation was for Montgomery Zoo failing to provide primary enclosures to protect the animals from injury or harm. A portion of the shifting chute for two tigers contained areas of flaking paint and rust, and the red river hog was able to lift the chain-link fence at the base of one of the sides of her enclosure, which created a gap to gain access outside of the enclosure.

The third repeat citation was for Montgomery Zoo for failing to provide primary enclosures that restricted other animals from entering the blue-and-gold macaws' enclosure. Two wild starlings were observed in the enclosure, risking the transmission of disease, parasites, and pests to the captive birds.

**October 29, 2024:** The USDA issued Montgomery Zoo three repeat citations. The first was for failing to provide primary enclosures to protect the animals from injury or harm. A portion of the shifting chute for two tigers contained areas of flaking paint and rust.

The second repeat citation was for Montgomery Zoo failing to have an effective program to control ants, to reduce the risk of contamination, disease, and discomfort to the animals. There was an ant infestation in multiple enclosures throughout the facility.

The third repeat citation was for Montgomery Zoo failing to provide primary enclosures to restrict other animals from entering. A wild squirrel and wild starling were observed in the hyacinth macaw's enclosure, risking the transmission of disease, parasites, and pests to the captive bird.

**August 1, 2024:** The USDA issued a repeat citation to Montgomery Zoo for failing to provide primary enclosures to protect the animals from injury or harm. A portion of the shifting chute for two tigers contained areas of flaking paint and rust, and an approximately five-foot gap was present between the outer wall of the cheetah enclosure and the end of the overhead netting, which could allow access into the housing area. Montgomery Zoo was also cited for failing to have an effective program to control insect pests, to reduce the risk of contamination, disease, and discomfort to the animals. There was an ant infestation in

multiple enclosures and food storage areas throughout the facility, and a cockroach outside the anteater enclosures.

The USDA issued Montgomery Zoo a repeat citation for failing to provide primary enclosures that restrict other animals from entering. A wild squirrel and two wild starlings were observed in the enclosure that contained a scarlet macaw and a blue-and-gold macaw, and a wild squirrel was observed in the primary enclosure that contained a blue-and-gold macaw, which risked the transmission of disease, parasites, and pests to the captive birds.

**May 17, 2024:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to handle a sloth in a manner that did not cause trauma or behavioral stress. An employee became frustrated with the sloth for not moving fast enough and asked another employee to use a pillowcase to capture the animal, who bit the employee on the thumb. The injury was severe enough that he sought medical attention. A repeat citation was also issued for failing to provide two blue and gold macaws with an enclosure that would restrict access to wildlife. Multiple wild Muscovy ducklings were observed in the enclosure, posing a risk of sharing diseases, parasites, and pests.

**April 23, 2024:** The USDA issued a critical citation to Montgomery Zoo for failing to provide a pygmy hippo with water from a safe source to reduce the risk of pathogen exposure. A medical record indicated that a male pygmy hippo was ataxic, circling, and appeared non-visual. After an assessment, a possible cause of clinical signs included multiple water-borne pathogens, including Listeria and Leptospirosis. The water for moats and water features in multiple enclosures was obtained from a pond that was located on the zoo grounds, which had no filtration system. Wildlife had access to the pond, and without proper filtration of this

water, there was concern for pathogen exposure to the animals.

The USDA also cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to have an effective program to control ants, which would have reduced the risk of contamination, disease, and discomfort to the animals. Ants were infesting the elephant barn and the hoof stock barn. A citation was also issued for failing to provide primary enclosures to restrict other animals from entering. A wild squirrel was observed in the primary enclosure that contained the military macaw, which posed a risk of transmitting diseases, parasites, and pests to the captive bird.

**January 18, 2024:** The USDA issued four critical citations to Montgomery Zoo. The first was for failing to provide a barred owl with a safe enclosure to protect the bird from injury. The owl's leg was caught under the barrier between his mew and the mew of his neighbor, a red-tailed hawk. The hawk was able to take hold of the barred owl's right leg. The leg sustained an extensive degloving injury that led to the election of humane euthanasia.

The second critical citation was issued for failing to properly clean and sanitize primate enclosures. Two black-capped squirrel monkeys were found deceased four days apart. Both necropsy reports indicated that the findings were consistent with acute systemic toxoplasmosis and that the disease was most likely associated with environmental contamination. "When housing facilities are contaminated and not properly cleaned and sanitized, animals housed within can become sick and potentially die."

The third critical citation was for Montgomery Zoo's failure to separate incompatible animals. A male pygmy hippo was observed with hindlimb lameness. The

caretaker stated that they had previously observed aggression from the potentially pregnant female hippo housed in the same primary enclosure, but the hippos had not been separated.

The final critical citation was for the Montgomery Zoo's failure to handle a grey parrot in a manner that would keep her contained during transport. A flighted 20-year-old female African grey parrot was transported across the parking lot from the vet clinic, clutched to the chest of a caretaker, without a transport container. The bird escaped and flew off the zoo grounds. The USDA also cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to have sufficient heating and cooling in the river otters' night house and for not having a sufficient number of adequately trained employees.

**October 11, 2023:** The USDA issued Montgomery Zoo a critical citation for failing to handle a parakeet as expeditiously and carefully as possible. A parakeet was found dead in the aviary, succumbing to injuries due to predation by a hawk. While the facility was certain the hawk was unable to enter the aviary, the hawk was still able to access the bird.

Other citations included failing to have complete disposition records for a llama and a parakeet; failing to properly store food (an open bag of primate biscuits was stored in the freezer and appeared discolored, and cleaning chemicals were stored beside food items used for enrichment purposes); failing to dispose of expired marshmallow crème that was used to administer medications to the chimpanzees; and failing to properly store bird feed away from the wall to allow for efficient cleaning and protect against deterioration, spoilage, contamination, and vermin infestation.

Lastly, Montgomery Zoo was cited for failing to provide sufficient shelter from the wind for

two birds. The turkey's enclosure did not inhibit wind from entering the exhibit, while the Harris hawk enclosure provided limited barriers to offset wind gusts that would enter the enclosure.

**October 10, 2023:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to provide sufficient primary enclosures to protect and contain storks. Two storks housed in separate exhibits managed to escape their primary enclosures by taking flight over them.

**August 18, 2023:** The USDA issued Montgomery Zoo a critical citation for failing to provide a red river hog an enclosure to keep her safely contained. A female red river hog escaped from her primary enclosure, and the keeper was bitten multiple times when trying to distract the animal from neighboring animal enclosures. An additional incident occurred when a volunteer performing routine husbandry tasks in the same river hog enclosure was bitten. Montgomery Zoo was also cited for failing to remove excreta from an enclosure housing two pygmy hippopotamuses. There was an accumulation of hardened feces along the shelter's interior walls.

**July 12, 2023:** The USDA issued Montgomery Zoo a repeat citation for failing to have an effective barrier for an enclosure housing goats, sheep, and a llama to prevent contact between the animals and members of the public. A food dispenser was located nearby, and the public could purchase food and feed the animals over the fence surrounding the enclosure. There was no attendant consistently present in the area. Montgomery Zoo was also cited for failing to have an effective barrier for an enclosure housing two adult common marmosets. A member of the public was observed sticking their fingers in the enclosure, and no attendees were stationed in the area.

**March 7, 2023:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to clear the vegetation and accumulations of construction materials adjacent to the perimeter fence, making it difficult to confirm whether the fence was structurally intact.

**December 13, 2022:** The USDA issued the Montgomery Zoo a critical citation for failing to handle a cheetah, Santiago, in a manner that ensured the animal's safety. Santiago died after consuming parts of a lunch box and its contents that had been dropped into his enclosure by a member of the public. In January 2023, the USDA issued an official warning to the Montgomery Zoo regarding this incident.

The Montgomery Zoo was also cited for failing to maintain two primate indoor holding enclosures in good repair. An enclosure that held two siamangs and another enclosure that held four chimpanzees had wire grate walls with the coating completely worn off the surface of the wire in some areas, and the wire was severely rusted. The chimpanzee enclosure also had excessive paint chipping and missing grout from multiple locations along the concrete walls. "Worn services [sic] that cannot be readily cleaned and sanitized may harbor bacteria or otherwise be harmful to enclosed animals, and paint chips could post [sic] a health hazard if ingested.

**July 18, 2017:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to maintain the chimpanzee's indoor housing facility in good repair. There was excessive paint chipping on the metal areas and on the walls that needed to be repaired to prevent ingestion of the chipped paint.

The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to maintain the housing facilities in good repair, which would prevent harm to the animals and ensure their good health and well-being:

- The red river hog's primary enclosure had a buried wire panel that had become exposed due to rain runoff. The exposed wire had sharp, pointy ends that could potentially injure the animal.
- The cheetah's indoor housing facility had an exposed nail that could have potentially caused injury to the animal.
- The paint on the ceiling of the North American black bears' indoor primary enclosure was peeling off and could potentially be ingested by the bears.

Montgomery Zoo was also cited by the USDA for failing to have an effective pest control program. There was evidence of feces from pests observed in the hay barn. Contamination of the animal's hay could cause illness. Additionally, a citation was issued for failing to properly dispose of trash and debris to protect the animals and prevent disease.

- An empty chip bag was observed floating in the pygmy hippo primary outdoor enclosure's water source.
- A juice box was observed floating in the black bear primary outdoor enclosure's water source.
- Latex gloves were improperly disposed of in the North America indoor housing facility drain.

Additionally, the USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to provide a suitable method to rapidly eliminate water from primary enclosures of the North America and Asia sections' outdoor stalls, where there was an accumulation of standing water with green growth residue, and failing to have an effective method to control ants in several areas of the park. Ants could potentially contaminate food sources and cause discomfort for the animals.

**July 9, 2015:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to clean the walls in the black bear's night house to protect the bear's

health. There was an orangish-brown oily film smeared on the bottom third of the wall.

**March 10, 2015:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to have an effective program to control ants to promote the health and well-being of the animals and reduce contamination in primate enclosures. In an enclosure housing two golden lion tamarins, an abundance of ants was present throughout the food, in the feeding bowl, on the walls, and within the enclosure. Additionally, in an enclosure housing three emperor tamarins, several trails of ants were observed.

**December 3, 2014:** The USDA issued Montgomery Zoo a repeat citation for failing to provide squirrel monkeys with clean toys for the health and well-being of the animals. A hanging toy made of a PVC pipe and fire hoses was covered in a greenish brown residue.

**November 4, 2014:** The USDA issued Montgomery Zoo an \$8,107 penalty for alleged violations dated May 15, 2014, April 13, 2014, January 28, 2014, December 8, 2013, and August 22, 2011.

**May 15, 2014:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to always have an attendant available during periods of public contact, which could prevent injuries to both the animals and the public. An attendant had worked both pony rides and the petting zoo at the same time on a Sunday the previous month. A repeat citation was issued for failing to maintain primate enclosures free of excessive rust. Rust could prevent the required cleaning and sanitization or affect the structural strength of the surface. The shift door in the spider monkeys' night quarters was rusted, as were the top crossbeams in the siamangs' primary enclosure. Another repeat citation was issued for failing to provide a suitable method to rapidly

eliminate water from the North America barn in the elk's outdoor stall, where there was an accumulation of standing water.

**March 13, 2014:** The USDA cited the Montgomery Zoo for failing to remove excessive rust in primate enclosures, which could prevent the required cleaning and sanitation or affect the structural integrity of the surface. In the spider monkey and chimpanzee's primary enclosure, the shift door, several perches, and platforms were rusting. In the spider monkeys' third stall, there was a horizontal metal bar, which was part of the cage, that was also pitted. In addition, citations were issued for the excessive amount of paint chipping in the chimpanzees' primary enclosure and for failing to clean these enclosures adequately. After the keeper stated she was finished cleaning, there were feces remaining on the walls and platforms

The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to have documentation from the attending veterinarian exempting an individually housed female chimpanzee from participating with the other chimpanzees in the environmental enhancement plan in consideration of her well-being. The chimpanzee was unable to participate with the others because she was being bullied.

Montgomery Zoo was cited for failing to maintain the perimeter fence bordering the petting zoo area in good repair to function as a secondary containment system, as several tree branches had come down and were leaning on the top of the barbed wire, and for failing to maintain several enclosures in good repair to protect the animals from injury and contain them:

- In the Asia barn, the nilgai and black bucks' enclosure had missing and broken boards, and boards in the wall that needed to be nailed down and/or replaced; and the axis deer stall had a

sliding door that was splitting, and it had jagged edges at the bottom corner.

- In the Africa barn, the kudu and zebra stalls had several boards in the wall that were broken.
- In the North America barn, the elk and bison's outdoor run had a dividing fence in disrepair at the bottom with the ends of the wire pointing outward, which could potentially harm the animals.
- The cougar and lynx enclosures had large branches on top of the fencing that could cause damage and compromise the integrity of the containment.

The USDA cited the Montgomery Zoo for failing to store hay in the elephant barn in a manner that adequately protected against deterioration, molding, and contamination. Portions of hay were on the floor. The facility was also cited for failing to have a suitable method to rapidly eliminate standing water accumulation in the outdoor stall enclosures for white-tailed deer, elk, and bison.

Montgomery Zoo was also cited for failing to remove an excessive amount of feces from the floors and walls of the elephant barn stalls, failing to have an effective pest control program as feces were found in the hay in the primary hay shed, and for failing to properly clean in order to protect the animals' health:

- Plastic dividers used to prevent stored hay from getting wet in the elephant barn were laden with excessive amounts of mildew and had not been cleaned.
- There was an orangish-brown, greasy film smeared on the walls and the shift door in the sloth bear's primary enclosure.
- There was an excessive amount of clutter in the primary hay shed that could potentially harbor pests and vermin.

**February 6, 2014:** The USDA issued Montgomery Zoo a direct citation for failing to handle animals in a manner that would not cause trauma, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort. Heating lamps were placed too close to combustible materials in the petting zoo stables, causing a fire that resulted in the death of two goats.

**January 24, 2014:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to provide adequate veterinary care for a baby calf. The previous October, it was noted that Jeta, a rhino, was not allowing her baby calf, Ethan, to nurse at a midday check. This information was not relayed to the veterinarian, and the medical logs did not state that the calf was being monitored, separated, or offered any supplemental feed after the observation. The following morning, Ethan was found recumbent. The veterinarian was immediately informed, and though he was administered supportive therapy at that time, Ethan died later that afternoon.

**December 11, 2013:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to maintain the fencing in the moat of the tiger enclosure to contain the big cat. The white Bengal tiger escaped the enclosure through a hole in the fencing that was underwater.

**July 23, 2013:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair to protect the animals from possible injuries. Several sliding doors in the barn housing hoof stock had worn strips of metal lining the edges that pointed into the enclosure.

**May 22, 2013:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to have an adequate barrier for the jaguar. The jaguar was able to get his paw between the wire of his enclosure and scratch a zoo visitor.

**August 24, 2012:** The USDA issued Montgomery Zoo a direct citation for failing to have a full-time veterinarian and a current written program of veterinary care for the part-time veterinarian. There was a giraffe under veterinary care for a leg injury who required a replacement cast and there were no records documenting the giraffe's treatment.

The Montgomery Zoo was issued a citation for failing to maintain the spider monkey enclosure in good repair, as the frame of the resting platforms in the night house had rusted through, leaving sharp points that could cause harm to the monkeys, and one edge of the enclosure near the front had severe rust and corrosion. Another citation was issued for failing to keep the barn doors of the hoof stock in good repair. The metal frame had rusted, leaving sharp pieces that could cause injury to animals passing through, and the wood had rotted, compromising the structural strength of the doors. In one stall in the Asia barn, the substrate had worn away or eroded, leaving the dig guard wire exposed. The wire was raised, risking the hoof stock becoming entangled or injured.

The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for storing syringes of rhino urine on the top shelf of the refrigerator in the elephant barn, with uncovered food for the elephants on the shelf below. A citation was also issued for failing to provide sufficient shade structures for giraffes and elephants. The one structure in the elephant yard was insufficient for all the elephants, and the one structure for the giraffes was located at the feed station, where the public was in close proximity. "Additional shade shall be provided which will allow the giraffes access to shade without the possible stress presented at the feeding station."

Montgomery Zoo was cited for failing to provide a black bear with an enclosure of

adequate height for normal postural adjustments in the outside area. A citation was also issued for failing to provide potable water to the elephants. During the day, when the elephants were not in the barn, they had access only to the water in the moat, which was thick, opaque, and greenish in color. Montgomery Zoo was also cited for failing to have an effective pest control program. Rodent droppings were on feed bags, and ants were in a bowl of food with trails of ants in the barns.

**August 31, 2011:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to provide hyenas with an enclosure strong enough to contain them. The hyenas were moved to a new enclosure to be shared with three cheetahs. A hyena created a hole in the chain-link fencing and escaped. They were recaptured, and both hyenas were moved to a holding pen.

**June 11, 2010:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to provide adequate veterinary care to two 5-day-old tiger cubs. The cubs were pulled from the mother shortly after birth and hand-raised by staff, without consulting the attending veterinarian or for any veterinary reason. “Pulling cubs too early can jeopardize their health status by interfering with the natural immunity provided through colostrum from the mothers [sic] milk and may lead to digestive and nutritional deficiencies that can occur when placed on milk replacers.”

Montgomery Zoo was also cited for failing to provide sufficient shade from direct sunlight for three elephants in their primary outside enclosure.

**November 8, 2007:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to maintain the inside walls of the llama barn in good repair to protect the animals from injury. Sheets of paneling had rotted or been chewed.

**November 1, 2005:** The USDA cited Montgomery Zoo for failing to ensure that medication was administered in a manner that ensured a cougar received an adequate dose. Food from the previous day’s feeding was in the night enclosure, with medication observed in it.

Montgomery Zoo was also cited for failing to maintain enclosures that contain and protect animals from injury. The bottom edge of the door to a pen containing hoof stock had rusted through, creating sharp points, and in another enclosure, the chain link had pulled away from the bottom of the gate, leaving gaps large enough to cause possible injury or escape. A citation was also issued for failing to provide sufficient shelter from inclement weather. An enclosure housed two maned wolves and two anteaters, but provided only one shelter, not large enough to accommodate all four. On the date of inspection, it was cold and raining. The anteaters were in the shelter while the two maned wolves huddled together in the yard.