

July 9, 2026

Bernadette Juarez
Deputy Administrator
USDA-APHIS-Animal Care

Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

**Re: Request to Investigate Sea World San Diego (License No. 93-C-0069)
for Apparent Violations of the Animal Welfare Act**

Dear Administrator Juarez,

I am writing on behalf of PETA to request that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) investigate the conspecific fighting between two sea lions during a show at Sea World, LLC (Sea World) in San Diego, California (License No. 93-C-0069), which appears to have resulted in an actively bleeding puncture wound and several abrasions.

On July 6, 2026, @california.local posted a video to Instagram of two sea lions fighting during the 7:00 p.m. show on July 5, 2026, at Sea World in San Diego. *See Video 1.*¹ Wildlife veterinarian Dr. Mason Payne reviewed this video and opined that there appeared to be an active puncture wound near the left flank of one sea lion caused by this behavior, as well as abrasions on the left thorax, head, and near their spine. He advised that the puncture wound needs to be evaluated by a veterinarian to ensure that it did not extend into the abdominal cavity and to appropriately treat the wound and prevent infection. The sea lions appeared to continue fighting when they entered the water from the main stage. One sea lion appeared to latch onto and twist the other, which Dr. Payne opined likely caused additional punctures or lacerations.

Under Animal Welfare Act (AWA) regulations, incompatible marine mammals cannot be housed in the same enclosure or housed “near other animals that cause them unreasonable stress or discomfort or interfere with their good health.” 9 C.F.R. § 3.109. According to Dr. Payne, the fighting behavior displayed by these sea lions indicates they are incompatible animals who should not be housed or forced to perform together, as performances can be stressful, lead to resource competition, and increase the risk of aggressive interactions between them. He advised that any unsupervised interactions between these two sea lions could result in serious physical trauma, as even their supervised interactions during this performance resulted in injuries.

Accordingly, PETA respectfully requests that the USDA investigate Sea World to ensure that these sea lions received appropriate veterinary care for their injuries as required by 9 C.F.R. § 2.40, that they are no longer forced to perform and/or housed together, and that they are otherwise being handled in accordance with the AWA.

¹ @california.local, INSTAGRAM (July 6, 2026), <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DaddVEXOToX/>.

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PETA FOUNDATION IS AN OPERATING
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ENTITIES:

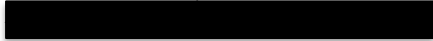
- PETA U.S.
- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter. Please inform me of the complaint number that your agency assigns to this correspondence.

Very truly yours,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

Emily Lively
Counsel and Marine Mammal Lead
Captive Animal Law Enforcement

A solid black rectangular box used to redact contact information, likely a phone number or email address.