Canton Grand Safari/Mystic Misfits

9515 FM 1255, Grand Saline, TX 75140

Canton Grand Safari, licensed as Mystic Misfits, was formerly managed by Jason Clay as East Texas Gator Park until March 2023. The facility has failed to meet 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 repeatedly cited the facility for numerous violations, including failing to provide animals with adequate veterinary care, failing to maintain enclosures in good repair, exposing young and immature animals to rough public handling that was detrimental to their health and wellbeing, failing to have responsible and knowledgeable attendants present at all times during periods of public contact, and failing to handle animals in ways that minimized the risk of harm to the animals and the public during interactions, resulting in multiple bites to patrons, including a hyena bite that caused a severe wound requiring hospitalization. The facility has also failed to provide animals with safe enclosures, resulting in the death of two ostriches. In January 2026, the USDA suspended the facility's license for 21 days for willfully violating AWA regulations and failing to meet the minimum standards for animals.

Contact PETA for documentation.

August 12, 2026: The USDA cited Mystic Misfits for failing to have an effective program for rodent control. Inspectors observed numerous rats in a macaque enclosure, posing potential disease risks to the primates.

May 19, 2026: The USDA cited Mystic Misfits for failing to have a complete and adequate perimeter fence. One section of the fence along the road was under construction; one section had a fallen tree on it; a gate near the bear enclosure had a one-foot gap underneath; and another gate had a gap where it should have latched to the perimeter fence.

May 2, 2026: The USDA issued Mystic Misfits a direct, repeat citation for failing to handle primates in a manner that minimized the risk of harm to the animals and the public. During an encounter, a member of the public forced a capuchin monkey named Theo to engage with her child. The woman continued to put Theo onto her child while Theo tried to push away and escape. Theo had his mouth wide open near the child's face and then bit the child on the arm. The woman and her child were also observed roughly handling and chasing the monkey. Other members of the public were observed repeatedly grabbing and passing Theo around as he squirmed, and Theo was observed unpredictably jumping from person to person, landing on people's heads, shoulders, and backs without warning. Inspectors also witnessed Theo bite the ears and necks of multiple other children during public interactions. The facility failed to implement measures to minimize the risks of contact between humans and primates, including allowing people who were exhibiting signs of illness such as coughing and running noses to interact with the primates.

The facility received a second direct citation for exposing young animals to rough public handling that was detrimental to their health

and wellbeing by allowing members of the public to enter the enclosure of a young spider monkey named Buddha. Inspectors observed guests roughly handling Buddha, chasing him, grabbing him by the arms and jerking him up off the ground. They also observed Buddha climbing the sides of his enclosure to avoid children who were chasing and grabbing him. The attendant was 8-10 feet away during these interactions and had his back turned at times, failing to provide appropriate supervision.

The USDA issued Mystic Misfits a third direct citation for allowing public contact with primates without ensuring the animals were trained or under the direct control of a knowledgeable and experienced handler. The facility employee supervising public encounters with a group of lemurs and two monkeys told inspectors she had been on the job for approximately one month and had no animal training or experience. She also stated that the lemurs were untrained and could not be recalled if necessary, that there was no limit on the number of people allowed in the enclosure at one time, and that on some evenings the lemur enclosure was full of people. During the interaction, inspectors observed primates climbing on the arms, shoulders, heads, and backs of guests. At one point, the employee did not have direct control of Theo the capuchin, and he jumped onto a woman, startling her. The employee had to pull Theo off the woman and struggled to maintain a hold on him for the remainder of the encounter. During a lemur encounter on another day, the facility employee supervising the interactions remained in the lockout area of the enclosure, separated from both the public and the lemurs. The lemurs were jumping on the heads, necks, shoulders, and backs of guests while the employee was separated from and had no direct control over the animals. Inspectors also observed a public interaction with spider monkey Buddha and capuchin monkey Theo in which the facility employee did not have direct control of either monkey. The monkeys freely climbed on and bit guests. The employee made no attempt to control interactions or intervene. At one point, Theo took lip balm from a visitor and the employee chased him around shouting “drop it,” but Theo did not respond, and a member of the public ultimately intervened to retrieve the lip balm. Inspectors noted that these incidents and the employees' lack of control demonstrated insufficient experience and knowledge in handling primates.

The USDA also cited the facility for failing to have responsible and knowledgeable attendants present at all times during periods of public contact. Inspectors observed several instances in which members of the public interacted with animals without an attendant present, including: scratching a coati’s back through enclosure fencing, reaching through a fence to pet and feed a tapir, and petting two elands, an oryx, several goats, and a pig in the petting zoo enclosure. On another date, inspectors observed that the tapir, emu, ostrich, primate, and lemur areas were all unmonitored during public interactions, including while guests were feeding the tapir and the emu. During other encounters, attendants were performing other duties and not monitoring interactions, including encounters with lemurs, an encounter with two ferrets in which guests removed the animals from their enclosures and passed them around, and an encounter with a young capuchin in which two guests chased the monkey and tried to hold them like a baby, resulting in the monkey biting a child.

The facility was also cited for exhibiting two bears without being licensed to do so. The bears were in an incomplete enclosure made up of a small yard attached to a modified shipping container.

January 2, 2026: The USDA issued Mystic Misfits a 21-day license suspension for willfully violating the regulations of the Animal Welfare Act and failing to meet the minimum standards for animals. The official notice cited alleged violations that occurred during public exhibitions between August 25, 2025, and December 31, 2025, in which the facility failed to handle animals in a way that minimized the risk of harm to the animals and the public, failed to obtain animals from sources permitted by the regulations, failed to ensure housing facilities were maintained in good repair to protect animals from injury, and failed to establish an effective program for "pest" control. (See September 29, 2025, and December 31, 2025.)

December 31, 2025: The USDA issued Mystic Misfits a critical citation for failing to handle a hyena in a manner that minimized the risk of harm to the animal and the public. On December 20, 2025, the licensee was walking a hyena on a thin dog leash in an area with direct access to the public. The hyena bit through the leash, escaped the licensee's control, and bit a guest in the calf. The guest sustained a severe wound requiring hospitalization.

September 29, 2025: The USDA issued Mystic Misfits a critical citation for purchasing two guinea baboons from an unlicensed individual. The USDA also issued two repeat citations for failing to maintain primate and hoofstock enclosures in good repair. An olive baboon was observed chewing on a hair tie inside their enclosure, a white-headed capuchin was observed reaching outside their enclosure to access an electrical outlet, and multiple hoofstock were exposed to several metal rods with sharp points inside their enclosure. The facility was also cited for failing to maintain an effective program to control rodents in the ring-tailed lemur enclosure, where many rats were observed.

June 9, 2025: The USDA issued an Official Warning to Mystic Misfits for the alleged violation that occurred on March 26, 2025, in which the facility failed to provide ostriches with a safe primary enclosure, resulting in the deaths of two ostriches. (See March 26, 2025.)

May 28, 2025: The USDA issued Mystic Misfits a repeat citation for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair. An outdoor enclosure housing two African crested porcupines had a metal wire panel on the ground and a hole in the wall with sharp metal points, and an outdoor hoofstock enclosure had several metal rods with exposed sharp points that could injure the animals. The facility was also cited for failing to maintain structurally sound primate enclosures. A crab-eating macaque was observed chewing on a long strip of material that had been removed from a swing, risking ingestion and injury to the animal.

March 26, 2025: The USDA issued Mystic Misfits a critical citation for failing to provide two ostriches with a safe primary enclosure. The ostriches were housed in an outdoor enclosure that shared a fence line with a hyena, and the hyena was able to contact the ostriches, killing one and mortally wounding the second ostrich, who had to be euthanized due to the severity of the wounds. The facility had begun building a separate fence line for the enclosure, but it had not yet been completed.

The USDA also cited Mystic Misfits for failing to provide animals with adequate veterinary care, including a young goat with a patch of hair loss along the back and chest. The goat was housed with multiple other species, and the facility representative stated that they thought the hair loss was likely caused by the wallaby. Additionally, a male crab-eating macaque had a fresh tail wound covering approximately two inches at the tip of his tail. The wound was bright red and missing hair and flesh. The facility

representative stated that the attending veterinarian had been contacted about the macaque's wound, but when the inspector called, the veterinarian stated they were not aware of either the goat's or the macaque's condition. The facility was also cited for failing to have adequate public barriers around a cage containing a cotton-topped tamarin, and for failing to maintain an outdoor hoofstock enclosure in good repair. The enclosure had exposed electrical wires that were hanging down and accessible to the animals.

January 8, 2024: The USDA cited Mystic Misfits for failing to have acquisition and/or disposition records for multiple animals available for review at the time of inspection, and for failing to have experienced handlers maintaining direct control and supervision of primates used in public exhibitions. The facility was allowing young primates to jump onto visitors' heads and shoulders.