



Ohio's Fatal Attractions

An overview of captive wildlife issues in Ohio



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Introduction

In order to protect the citizens of Ohio and promote wildlife conservation and animal welfare, on January 6, 2011, former Governor Ted Strickland signed an Executive Order (EO) restricting the possession and sale of dangerous wild animals, specifically big cats, bears, wolves, non-human primates, large constricting and venomous snakes, and crocodilians. The EO established a temporary ban on new exotic pet ownership, directed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to adopt regulations for existing owners, and limited new acquisition to qualified entities (such as wildlife sanctuaries, rehabilitators, and facilities accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums). The DNR failed to draft regulations and Ohio's new governor, John Kasich, chose not to extend the EO, leaving Ohio as one of fewer than 10 states with virtually no regulation of private ownership of dangerous wild animals.

On October 18, 2011, Terry Thompson of Zanesville, Ohio, released dozens of wild and exotic animals from his private menagerie before committing suicide. Residents were warned to stay in their homes, a sign on the interstate cautioned drivers to stay in their cars, and schools were closed. By the time sheriff deputies brought the situation under control, nearly 50 lions, tigers, bears, and other exotic animals had been shot and killed. If the January 2011 Emergency Rule had not been allowed to expire, a convicted animal abuser like Thompson would almost certainly have been barred from owning dangerous wild animals.

On March 8, 2012, Ohio State Senator Troy Balderson introduced S.B. 310—The Dangerous Wild Animal Act. Although the bill is a serious response to the current crisis of privately-owned exotic animals in Ohio, it has at least two major defects. First, it provides an exemption for private citizens associated with the Zoological Association of America (ZAA) – a fringe organization that promotes the keeping of dangerous wild animals as pets. Second, the bill specifically allows people to acquire large constricting snakes as pets.

Exotic animals have specialized needs that are exceedingly difficult to meet in captivity. These species typically require vast spaces, natural habitats, specialized diets, exercise, and opportunities to express natural behaviors such as foraging, hunting, socializing, climbing, digging, denning, and exploring. Accredited zoos and bona fide wildlife sanctuaries spend considerable resources to provide animals with an enriched environment to alleviate profound boredom and psychological distress, but the same cannot be said of roadside zoos or individuals who cage these species in Ohio backyards, garages, and basements. In such cases, animals usually spend their lives—often decades—in small barren cages, living on concrete or hard compacted dirt, and are denied even the basic necessities of adequate food, shelter,

veterinary care, and companionship. They develop an array of captivity-induced health problems and neurotic behaviors as a result of living in grossly sub-standard conditions. For example, scientists have found significantly higher stress levels in caged carnivores who, in the wild, would roam vast territories.¹

Dangerous wild animals also pose a safety threat to the community. Based on a compilation of dangerous incidents reported in news articles and government documents since 1990, **Ohio ranks third** among the 50 states in dangerous incidents involving big cats, bears, and non-human primates that resulted in injury or death. Just in Ohio, since 1990, 34 people, including 11 children, suffered injuries and one person was killed by these dangerous mammals. Similarly, news articles indicate that, since 2003, one Ohio man was strangled to death by his pet python and two others died after being bitten by captive venomous snakes.

Privately owned exotic animals are much more apt to be involved in incidents resulting in injury and death than dogs or other domesticated species. One study that focused on captive tigers in the U.S. determined that tigers are 360-720 times more likely to be involved in a fatal attack than dogs.² For Deirdre Herbert, the mother of the young man mauled to death by a captive bear in August 2010 in Lorain County, Ohio, one deadly incident is one too many. In a letter to then-Governor Strickland, Herbert wrote, “Keeping dangerous animals as pets or in displays is a prescription for more tragedies like the one me and my family have experienced ... one that will live with us forever.”

Due to the lack of regulation of dangerous wild animals in Ohio, many unqualified individuals across the state possess, breed, and sell these animals. This is a growing problem, as exotic animals are easily available from breeders, auctions, and Internet dealers. As described in one Huffington Post article, “The popularity of exotic pets—tigers in particular—is surging, perhaps attributable to a popular mindset that bigger and badder is better. As one owner exclaimed, ‘Tigers are the new pit bulls.’”³

Purchased as cute, cuddly, and vulnerable infants, wild animals quickly mature into a powerful and lethal combination of claws, fangs, and unpredictable behavior. Some owners mistakenly think that the animals will be rendered harmless if they mutilate them by declawing and defanging, painful procedures that can result in chronic health problems. Since there is no system in place to track dangerous wild animals in Ohio, information about wild animals kept as pets typically comes to light through news reports, usually when there has been an escape or attack.

Further, the private possession and sale of dangerous wild animals, many of whom are imperiled in the wild, does not benefit—and may actually harm—conservation of these species. For example, studies show that unwanted tigers bred for the exotic pet trade may end up fueling the illegal market for tiger parts and derivatives used in traditional Asian medicine that contributes to the decimation of wild populations.⁴ In addition, frivolous animal entertainment operations conducted by unqualified individuals may undermine conservation efforts by negatively impacting public conservation attitudes and misleading the public into thinking that the species is prevalent in the wild.⁵

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has compiled information from federal inspection reports, investigations, and news articles to shine a light on the status of captive wildlife in Ohio. This report presents an overview—both historical and current—of some of the worst facilities known to keep dangerous wild animals: “Ohio’s Fatal Attractions.” These facilities are most accurately described as unaccredited roadside zoos, traveling menageries, and pseudo-sanctuaries that demonstrate the neglect, unsafe handling, and preventable tragedies that inevitably occur when wild animals are kept captive by unqualified individuals. Some of the “Fatal Attractions” are facilities that, despite serious and repeated violations of the Animal Welfare Act, continue to be licensed as exhibitors or dealers by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Such federal licensing, without additional state regulation, is clearly insufficient to ensure public safety and animal welfare – a June 2010 audit report issued by USDA’s own Office of Inspector General found that USDA’s inspection and licensing programs had severe deficiencies (for example, the auditors questioned the safety conditions at nearly 50 percent of the more than 30 exhibition sites visited).⁶ Some of the “Fatal Attractions” have lost or cancelled their USDA license yet, due to Ohio’s lack of regulations, these individuals can continue to possess dangerous animals. Violations of the minimum standards of the federal Animal Welfare Act by Ohio’s “Fatal Attractions” include: failure to provide veterinary care to sick and emaciated animals, repeatedly failing to provide enclosures and perimeter fencing to safely contain dangerous animals, failure to provide adequate shelter during below-freezing temperatures, caging incompatible animals together or near each other resulting in violent fights, and filthy and unsanitary conditions.

HSUS also collected from news reports dangerous incidents involving exotic pet owners, which likely represent only a fraction of the total incidents that have actually occurred. This information, along with highlights of additional dangerous, cruel, and illegal incidents involving private individuals and licensed facilities in Ohio in the last decade is reflected in the table “Lessons Not Learned.” Both tables are listed alphabetically by community to help residents identify the presence of dangerous wild animals in their neighborhoods.

This report **excludes** information about federally-licensed facilities in Ohio that have equally appalling records of animal care, but do not have big cats, bears, primates, or wolves. However, as mentioned above, such federal-licensing does not adequately ensure public safety and animal welfare, and without state regulation, nothing prevents these same entities from also acquiring dangerous wild animals in the future.

While HSUS made every effort to research news articles and review government documents to determine the current extent of the problem, without state regulation of possession and sale, the number of dangerous wild animals kept in Ohio, and the injuries these animals have inflicted, is unknown to both HSUS and Ohio state officials.

Ohio's Fatal Attractions

This list, sorted alphabetically by community, includes current and former federally-licensed animal exhibitors and dealers in Ohio that are known to have had attacks that resulted in death or serious injury, recent citations for unsafe caging of dangerous animals, repeat and serious Animal Welfare Act violations that directly impact animal welfare, and/or USDA enforcement actions that resulted in license revocation, penalties, and/or official warnings. Without permanent state regulations concerning exotic animals, individuals who have lost their federal license, or have even been convicted of animal abuse, may continue to possess dangerous wild animals.

Flores, Jose and Denise / Tiger Paw Exotic Rescue Center of Ohio

Location	Ashland, Ohio
USDA License #	31-C-0179
Inventory	7 tigers, 1 cougar (as of January 30, 2012*)
Issues	<p>Neighbors expressed concern about living near dangerous wild animals when the Flores and five adult tigers moved to their current location in 2006. The tigers lived in the basement in wire cages barely twice the length of the animals' bodies (photos available) until cages were eventually built for them outside.^{7,8} In 2009, the Flores—and their five tigers—narrowly escaped eviction after they were served with a foreclosure notice.⁹</p> <p>In 2010 and 2011, the USDA cited Tiger Paw Exotic Rescue Center for:¹⁰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeated failure to provide a perimeter fence of sufficient height to act as a secondary containment in the event that an animal was to escape the primary enclosure, which remained uncorrected as of January 6, 2011.• Failure to maintain enclosures to protect animals from injury and prevent escapes. A cage had a piece of tube steel that was broken from the framework and the inspector wrote, “Loose framework can compromise the structural strength of the cage.”

Mazzola, Sam / World Animal Studios

Location	Columbia Station, Ohio
USDA License #	Revoked in 2009
Inventory	Continued to possess bears tigers, and wolves until his death on July 10, 2011
Issues	<p>In 2009, after years of repeatedly violating the Animal Welfare Act - including allowing the public to have direct contact with potentially dangerous wild animals – the USDA permanently revoked Mazzola's license to display big cats, bears, and other animals and he was fined \$21,000.¹¹</p> <p>Despite the loss of his USDA license, Ohio's lack of regulations allowed Mazzola, a convicted felon, to keep exotic animals on his property, and in August 2010, 24-year-old Brent Kandra was attacked and killed by a 500-pound black bear at Mazzola's facility.^{12, 13} Kandra suffered more than 600 wounds, including a laceration to his left brachial artery, two broken ribs, a puncture wound to his heart, and lacerations of his spleen, left kidney, and left lung. According to the autopsy report, Kandra died from "multiple blunt impacts and sharp force injuries to the head, torso and extremities."¹⁴</p>

Pearson, Lorenza / L & L Exotic Animal Farm

Location	Copley Township, Ohio
USDA License #	Revoked in 2007
Inventory	No animals at facility as of April 14, 2009*
Issues	<p>Evidence that Pearson was unqualified to keep dangerous wild animals first surfaced in 1983 when his 2-year-old son was killed by Pearson's pet tiger.¹⁵</p> <p>For more than eight years, township officials, the Summit County Health District, and the USDA battled with Pearson over his failure to provide veterinary care to extremely ill and emaciated animals, unsafe caging and animal escapes, filthy and foul-smelling conditions, and environmental concerns from manure and waste runoff. In 2006, a USDA veterinarian was attacked by a tiger during an inspection at Pearson's facility.¹⁶ The tiger reached outside the cage, grabbed the woman's arm, pulled her toward the cage, and started mouthing her arm. Fortunately, she was treated at the hospital for only scratches and bruising.</p> <p>Dozens of big cats and bears were ultimately confiscated from the farm and in 2007, after citing Pearson for more than 280 violations of the Animal Welfare Act, the USDA permanently revoked his license to sell or exhibit animals.¹⁷</p> <p>On February 17, 2011, a 6th Circuit Court judge denied Pearson's appeal of the order to revoke his license and upheld the USDA's fine of \$93,975 for Animal Welfare Act violations.¹⁸</p>

Cziraky, Diana / Siberian Tiger Foundation

Location	Gambier, Ohio
USDA License #	Revoked in 2002
Inventory	At the expense of Knox County residents, the animals were seized and relocated to other facilities after Cziraky was evicted from the property in 2007. ¹⁹
Issues	<p>The Siberian Tiger Foundation, operated by Diana Cziraky, offered close encounters with the facility's five tigers and three lions—all had been declawed and several were defanged.</p> <p>The facility chained its juvenile and adult big cats inside an enclosure and, for a fee, allowed groups of up to 20 adults and children to enter the enclosure to pet and handle the animals. Handlers sprayed the big cats in the face and eyes with vinegar if they became aggressive. According to an employee, some of the big cats were so stressed by the constant handling that they hid when they heard cars coming up the driveway.²⁰</p> <p>During 2000, there were at least ten incidents of people being bitten or otherwise injured by big cats at this facility.²¹ A 10-year-old boy required 50 stitches after he was knocked to the ground and bitten on the leg by a tiger while participating in a "close encounter." In another case, a 10-year-old girl bent down to pet a tiger's paw, the cat stood up and came down with his mouth on the girl's head, drove her to the ground and started shaking her. A lion pounced on a 19-year-old and had her flat on the ground while trying to bite her back. The lion released her after being sprayed with vinegar. Cziraky's first tiger that attacked a small girl was confiscated by the health department and decapitated to test the animal for rabies.²²</p> <p>In 2002, a Judicial Officer ruled that Cziraky failed to handle lions and tigers during public exhibition so there was minimal risk of harm to the public and continued to exhibit while her license was suspended. Cziraky's USDA license was revoked.</p>

Harter, Angela / Rescue One

Location	Lancaster, Ohio
USDA License #	No longer possesses a USDA license as of February 2011 (formerly #31-C-0135)
Inventory	11 tigers, 6 lions, 1 black bear, 3 cougars (as of December 21, 2010*)
Issues	<p>In October 2010, Rescue One was cited by the USDA for:²³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A tiger enclosure that was in disrepair. The inspector wrote, “The four tigers in this enclosure are very large and could pass a paw through and injure [themselves] or possibly enlarge the open area (hole) that may allow escape.”• An enclosure containing a juvenile lion had a wide gap that would allow the lion’s paw to slide underneath and cause injury to the animal or a caretaker• Failure to separate three tigers who were incompatible as evidenced by the fact that during the inspection a male tiger displayed very aggressive behavior toward two female tigers in the same enclosure, resulting in a serious fight that lasted 30 minutes. The inspector wrote, “One female tiger was so stressed that her behavior became depressed with head down and reluctance to move.”• Unsanitary food receptacles that were caked with brownish organic matter and dried blood• Torn tarps and string hanging into a cougar enclosure, posing a risk of harm if ingested by the cougar

Joseph, Matt and Chris

Location	Lisbon, Ohio
USDA License #	No longer possesses a USDA license as of September 2009 (formerly #31-C-0133)
Inventory	8 big cats (as of July 10, 2009*)
Issues	<p>In 2009, Matt Joseph was cited by the USDA for:²⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Failure to maintain the barrier between animals and the public to assure the safety of the public, which resulted in a 10-year-old girl getting her hand and arm into a cage that contained two cougars. One of the cougars grabbed and released the child's arm at least three times and Chris Joseph had to crawl into the animals' den box to finally free the girl's arm from the cougar's jaws. The girl was rushed to a local hospital and then had to be airlifted to Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh.²⁵• Failure to lock the gate to the barrier fence, which was also the perimeter fence <p>On May 10, 2011, the USDA fined Matt Joseph \$1,714 for unsafe handling of dangerous animals in relation to the 2009 incident when a cougar bit a girl.²⁶</p>

Crabtree, Katherine / Hill Top Farm

Location	Lucasville, Ohio
USDA License #	No longer possesses a USDA license as of October 2009 (formerly #31-B-0030)
Inventory	3 bears, 2 big cats, 3 non-human primates (as of September 28, 2009*)
Issues	<p>In just two inspections during the fall of 2009, Hill Top Farm was cited by the USDA for:²⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Failure to provide adequate veterinary care to a very thin tiger and bear as well as a fox who was lethargic, had dry and squinting eyes, a hunched posture, a very weak gait, and a dull hair coat• Failure to safely house a bear who was attacked by a tiger in the adjacent cage during the inspection. The inspector wrote that spraying the tiger with water and “heavy prodding” would not compel the tiger to release the bear. The bear was “screaming with pain,” “groaning was heard for a long time after it was freed,” and the bear’s injured leg was bleeding and had bone and tendons protruding through the skin – the bear had to be euthanized. The inspector wrote that “The proper handling of the bear would have prevented a serious injury and death of a bear.”• Housing dogs with unknown health and vaccination histories in the vicinity of lion, tiger, and bear enclosures, thereby risking the spread of disease from the dogs to the exotic animals• Repeated failure to vaccinate white-tailed deer• An incomplete program of veterinary care• Failure to report deaths to the attending veterinarian• Failure to provide drinking water to animals who were excessively thirsty• A filthy enclosure with several inches of feces in one corner• Repeated failure to provide records of acquisition, disposition, deaths, and escapes <p>On January 10, 2012, the USDA issued an Official Warning to Hill Top Farms for failure to safely handle dangerous animals, repeated failure to provide veterinary care, and repeated failure to maintain records in 2008 and 2009.²⁸</p>

Huntsman, Lee and Cyndi / Stump Hill Farm

Location	Massillon, Ohio
USDA License #	31-C-0050
Inventory	10 tigers, 2 lions, 1 leopard, 8 black bears, 3 Grizzly bears, 2 cougars, 2 gray wolves, 1 chimpanzee, 2 baboons, 1 black lemur, 2 brown lemurs, 1 brown capuchin, 5 ring-tailed lemurs (as of December 14, 2011*)
Issues	<p>Since 2008, Stump Hill Farm has been cited by the USDA for:²⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeated failure to provide an enclosure sufficient to contain a tiger• Failure to provide veterinary care to a bear with extensive hair loss, a female pot belly pig with peeling skin along her back, a coatimundi who was treated with a brand of flea treatment which resulted in hair loss and skin irritation, and a ferret with ulcerated skin• Unsafe handling of a juvenile lion during photo shoots with the public by a volunteer lacking experience and knowledge• Failure to provide sufficient space to four adult tigers who were housed in enclosures with tops that were only six feet in height• Declawing a juvenile tiger, a painful procedure that can cause chronic health problems• Mis-handling an adult reindeer who fell out of a trailer onto the highway during transport• Two tigers had dug a hole in one corner of an enclosure. The inspector wrote, "This area must be repaired in order to prevent the animals from continuing to dig and potentially making a route of escape."• Failure to vaccinate animals and conduct fecal exams as mandated by the Program of Veterinary Care• Failure to have a current Program of Veterinary Care (it was 11 years old)• Failure to maintain enclosures housing cougars, lynx, leopard, coyote, fox, baboons, and camels that had support bars that were bent and/or extremely rusted, resting perches and/or walls that were rotted or missing boards, or were otherwise unsound• The nest box in a capuchin enclosure had carpeting that was excessively soiled and a feeding board with an excessive accumulation of organic debris• An excessive accumulation of excreta and debris in three outdoor rabbit enclosures• A dirty, rusty drinking water trough for bears• A filthy freezer• A baboon enclosure had bent portions of fencing protruding inward• Failure to maintain records of acquisition and disposition (including deaths)

Huntsman, Lee and Cyndi / Stump Hill Farm

for numerous animals

- Failure to maintain perimeter fencing
- Inadequate pest control

For at least two decades, Stump Hill Farm has provided Massillon High School with a new tiger cub each year to use as the school's football mascot.³⁰

Stump Hill Farm buys animals at auction and prematurely removes infant animals from their mothers for commercial purposes.^{31,32}

Following the Zanesville tragedy, Cyndi Huntsman stated that she knew Terry Thompson "very, very well" and records show Huntsman provided Thompson with at least one black bear.^{33,34}

According to several comments posted on news web sites by individual(s) identifying themselves as a neighbor of Stump Hill Farm, the facility has allegedly had dangerous animals escape.^{35,36,37}

Cyndi Huntsman is a trustee with the Ohio Association of Animal Owners.***

Burnette, Jim / Burnette's Farm and Education Center

Location	Olmstead Falls, Ohio
USDA License #	No longer possesses a USDA license as of February 2009 (formerly #31-C-0027)
Inventory	3 non-human primates (as of January 12, 2009*)
Issues	<p>In its last two inspections, Burnette's Farm and Education Center was repeatedly cited by the USDA for, among other violations.³⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Failure to provide adequate veterinary care to sick, seriously underweight, and dying animals and not informing the attending veterinarian of animal deaths• Animals only had access to frozen drinking water• Failure to provide adequate shelter during below-freezing temperatures• Failure to provide adequate food to at least 43 animals• Filthy enclosures• Failure to separate incompatible animals, resulting in the death of a lamb and causing stress for a skunk• Failure to have a sufficient number of employees to properly care for the animals; there was only one caretaker for 87 animals in addition to numerous birds at the facility <p>In 2007 a girl was scratched by a rhesus macaque at Burnette's. About 90 percent of adult macaques carry the herpes B virus. When transmitted to humans—typically through bites and scratches—herpes B causes severe neurological impairment and, in approximately 80 percent of cases, death.^{39,40}</p> <p>In 2001, a worker spreading gravel in a tiger enclosure was mauled and critically injured by a 500-pound tiger. The worker underwent surgery for bite wounds to his neck.⁴¹</p> <p>In October 2008, the Cuyahoga County Board of Health inspected Burnette's Farm and subsequently sent a letter detailing problems with manure, standing water, and excessive scrap. The Board recommended that Burnette sell his exotic animals.⁴²</p>

Hetrick, Kenneth / Tiger Ridge Exotics

Location	Perrysburg, Ohio
USDA License #	31-C-0048
Inventory	7 tigers, 3 lions, 1 liger, 1 leopard, 2 Grizzly bears (as of December 29, 2011*)
Issues	<p>Since 2010, Tiger Ridge was cited by the USDA for, among other violations:⁴³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeated failure to provide enclosures that could safely contain two adult lions and two adult wolves. The inspector wrote, “[The] adult lions could easily jump out ...” and “[The] wolves could leap out of the enclosure from the top of the shelter box ...”• Portions of fencing for two enclosures containing dangerous animals were weakly secured to structural supports with only plastic zip ties or rope• Failure to maintain enclosures in good repair• Failure to provide two big cats with dry bedding during rainy, cold weather• Failure to provide adequate drainage to seven big cats and wolves with excessive water in their enclosures• The capture equipment intended for use in the event of an animal escape was determined to be useless• The facility had inadequate public barriers for two tiger cages, a leopard cage, and a lion cage. The inspector wrote, “[I]nspectors were able to easily reach the primary enclosures containing large felids.”• Repeated failure to provide a perimeter fence• Declawing a 5-month-old tiger for non-medical reasons• The walls of a shelter for an adult tiger were leaning and close to collapsing• Failure to provide drinkable water – all the water receptacles were dirty and had greenish to dark-black water and a pond intended as the source of drinking water for two grizzly bears was covered with a layer of algae• Incomplete program of veterinary care• Repeated failure to provide a veterinarian-approved diet to big cats <p>On January 10, 2012, the USDA issued an Official Warning to Hetrick for failure to feed big cats a veterinarian-approved diet.⁴⁴</p> <p>In 2004, Kenneth Hetrick was mauled by two grizzly bears while he was cleaning a cage. Hetrick claimed, “I looked like I had been in a hatchet fight,” and said that it had taken hours for a doctor to stitch up his many wounds.⁴⁵</p> <p>Hetrick has advertised grizzly bear cubs for sale in <i>Animal Finder’s Guide</i>**.⁴⁶</p>

Vierstra, Cyril / Bethsaida Farms

Location	Radcliff, Ohio
USDA License #	31-B-0147
Inventory	3 tigers (as of November 10, 2011*)
Issues	<p>Since 2010, Bethsaida Farms was cited by the USDA for:⁴⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeated failure to provide enclosures that could safely contain tigers. The inspector wrote, “The enclosure fence is not high enough for tigers to prevent a possible escape.”• An insufficient perimeter fence around a tiger enclosure• Failure to feed a tiger a nutritional diet as required in the veterinary-approved diet plan• Failure to protect raw meat from contamination—the meat was swarming with flies• Repeated failure to dispose of expired drugs used to sedate tigers• The door to a camel’s shelter was so low that the camel could not walk upright through the door without rubbing his head• Disposing of animal debris and animal waste at the local Township trustee building and an apartment building dumpster, neither of which were approved or legal facilities for animal waste disposal• A camel was housed in a barn stall that had several inches of feces and urine and the camel’s knees were saturated with wet fecal contamination• A water container for an alpaca and camel had not been sanitized in months• Repeated failure to provide records of acquisition for a bear• Failure to be available for inspection <p>On September 13, 2010, the USDA issued an Official Warning to Bethsaida Farms for repeat violations of failing to provide adequate veterinary care and failure to maintain records of acquisition.⁴⁸</p> <p>Bethsaida Farms has advertised animals including a tiger and a monkey for sale in <i>Animal Finder’s Guide</i>**.⁴⁹</p> <p>Bethsaida Farms identifies itself as a member of the Zoological Association of America and the Ohio Association of Animal Owners.***</p>

Coburn, Bill / Wild Acres Ranch, Safari Adventures at Kalahari Resort, and a mobile zoo called Jungle Island Zoo

Location	Sandusky, Ohio
USDA License #	31-C-0211 (formerly #31-B-0141)
Inventory	2 tigers (as of December 6, 2011*)
Issues	<p>Since 2005, Wild Acres Ranch has been cited by the USDA for:⁵⁰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using an unvaccinated 3½-week-old tiger cub for more than 50 photos with the public in a three day period at Kalahari Resort. The inspector wrote, “Frequent exposure of young and immature unvaccinated cubs to the public is detrimental to their health and well being.” • Failure to provide transportation records for which the inspector wrote, “This facility uses small exotic animals such as tiger, lion and bear cubs for photo [sessions] and then when they are no longer cubs they are sold and transported.” • Housing a 6-week-old tiger cub in an enclosure with a cement floor and only a plastic dog kennel as shelter from the sun. At the time of inspection, the temperature of the cement was 110 degrees and the inside of the plastic kennel was 97 degrees. The inspector wrote, “More shelter must be provided to allow for cooler living conditions and to avoid overheating or discomfort and possible death of such a young animal.” • Failure to provide adequate veterinary care to a 6-week-old tiger when it could not be determined if the cub had been appropriately vaccinated • Housing numerous bear cubs in transport enclosures inside a garage that also contained a gas grill, gasoline, a lawn mower and a car. The inspector wrote, “[T]hese items [...] could be dangerous to them because of fumes.” • Failure to provide adequate space to three water buffalo who were held in a transport trailer that was not large enough. The inspector wrote, “[T]here is not enough adequate freedom of movement which could cause injury to the animals during transport.” • Repeated failure to be available for inspection • Improper food storage and failure to dispose of expired drugs • Inadequate perimeter fence • Failure to properly mark carriers used to transport lion cubs • Failure to maintain acquisition records <p>Wild Acres Ranch provides lion and tiger cubs for photos with the public at the Kalahari Resort in Sandusky, Ohio.⁵¹ Coburn’s Safari Adventures is accredited by ZAA, and Coburn’s Jungle Island Zoo is a member of OAAO.***</p>

Sawmiller, Robert / Wildlife on Wheels

Location	Wapakoneta, Ohio
USDA License #	31-C-0221 (formerly 31-C-0083)
Inventory	1 black bear, 3 brown bears, 4 cougars, 3 grey wolves (as of November 9, 2011*)
Issues	<p>In six inspections conducted in 2010 and 2011 that produced 25 pages of serious violations, the USDA repeatedly cited Sawmiller for, among other violations:⁵²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unsafe handling of bears who were able to reach out of the enclosures• Failure to provide veterinary care, including to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ A cougar who was unmoving, appeared distressed, was breathing hard, and subsequently died – this animal was not seen by a veterinarian within 24 hours as required by the USDA inspector, and was left to succumb from its illness without pain relief or supportive care. The inspector wrote: “The lack of appropriate veterinary care increased the unnecessary pain and suffering for the cougar.”○ One of two young bears housed in a wet pen with wet bedding who had a reddened area on the sternum○ A wolf hybrid with areas of hair loss and lesions “consistent with ... moist dermatitis [which] can be a painful condition.”• Failure to provide bears and a cougar with adequate shelter during below-freezing temperatures• Failure to maintain enclosures to prevent escapes, including attaching a shelter for a bear to the outside of an enclosure with only strands of wire• Risking injury to animals by using exposed livestock wiring as flooring• Failure to provide an adequate perimeter fence• Failure to provide a proper diet to carnivores• Unsanitary food receptacles that were covered in bird feces or were full of ice• Failure to provide clean drinking water• An excessive accumulation of old bones in and under enclosures containing wolf hybrids and coyotes, and at least six inches of feces and deer hair in a cougar shelter <p>On January 19, 2011, the USDA issued an Official Warning to Sawmiller for serious violations identified during its December 8, 2010, inspection.⁵³ On January 10, 2012, the USDA issued an Official Warning to Sawmiller for serious violations identified during inspections between January 19, 2011 and March 21, 2011.⁵⁴</p> <p>Sawmiller was suspected by federal authorities of illegally purchasing a grizzly bear from a Minnesota man who was tried and convicted of violating the Lacey Act.⁵⁵</p>

Sawmiller, Robert / Wildlife on Wheels

In 2006, Sawmiller advertised a “free” 8-week-old black bear cub who was no longer needed for exhibition in *Animal Finders’ Guide***.⁵⁶

McGuire, Kord / Heaven's Corner For Endangered Animals

Location	West Alexandria, Ohio
USDA License #	31-C-0031
Inventory	4 tigers, 2 leopards, 2 cougars, 2 brown bears, 4 gray wolves, 4 brown capuchins, 4 ring-tailed lemurs (as of September 13, 2011*)
Issues	<p>Since 2009, Heaven's Corner has been cited by the USDA for, among other violations:⁵⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeated failure to provide enclosures that could safely contain tigers. The inspector wrote, "These enclosures are not tall enough to properly contain the animals as these adult tigers could easily jump out of the enclosure if they were motivated to do so."• Failure to have a veterinarian-approved feeding plan for big cats• Failure to have an adequate program of veterinary care for numerous species including bears, wolf hybrids, lemurs, and capuchins• Failure to provide safe housing for a bear who was in an enclosure that contained an old rusty container with protruding bits of sharp metal• Failure to provide adequate environment enhancement to promote the psychological well-being of non-human primates• Repeated failure to provide a perimeter fence <p>Heaven's Corner has advertised bear cubs for sale in <i>Animal Finder's Guide</i>**.⁵⁸</p> <p>Heaven's Corner owner Kord McGuire recalls the day he was attacked by a 200-pound cougar who he was transferring to a van: "Suddenly Zeb leaped up and took my arm in his mouth. He also bit me on the side, narrowly missing my kidney. As I fought him off, he went for my foot, shredding the brand new Nike tennis shoe I was wearing. I finally escaped by climbing on top of the cage."⁵⁹</p>

Thompson, Terry and Marian

Location	Zanesville, Ohio
USDA License #	Never possessed a USDA license
Inventory	None currently. Prior to October 18, 2011: 18 tigers, 17 African lions, 6 black bears, 3 Grizzly bears, 3 cougars, 3 leopards, 2 wolves, 1 baboon, 3 macaques
Issues	<p>On October 18, 2011, Terry Thompson released dozens of dangerous wild animals from his private menagerie and then killed himself. The sheriff's office warned residents to stay in their homes and recommended that local schools close, and a sign on the Interstate cautioned motorists to stay in their vehicles. Forty-nine animals were subsequently shot and killed by sheriff's deputies: two wolves, six black bears, two grizzly bears, 18 tigers, three cougars, 17 African lions, and one baboon. One macaque monkey was never found and was presumed killed and eaten by one of the big cats. Three leopards, a grizzly bear and two monkeys who had not been turned loose, were taken to the Columbus Zoo. Thompson had just been released from prison after serving a one-year term for weapons offenses.^{60,61}</p> <p>In 2005, Thompson was sentenced to six months of house arrest and fined \$2,870 for a conviction on cruelty to animals and other charges relating to allegations that three cows and a bison had died on another property he owned.⁶²</p>

Lessons Not Learned

Sorted alphabetically by community, this list contains dangerous incidents in Ohio involving big cats, bears, primates, and snakes kept as pets as well as those kept by USDA licensees not included in the list of “Fatal Attractions,” reports of inhumane care and unsafe caging, illegal wildlife trafficking, and communities where residents have had, and may still have, dangerous wild animals thereby introducing unnecessary risk to the community.

Location	Incident
Anderson Township, Ohio	2011: A 6-foot Burmese python was discovered in a dumpster outside of a KFC restaurant by a trash collector. ⁶³
Amelia, Ohio	2011: A 7-year-old capuchin monkey escaped from a cage while being taken to the vet. The monkey was loose for three days and spotted near a high school. ⁶⁴
Berlin Center, Ohio	2011: The USDA cited Noah’s Lost Ark for failure to provide enclosures that were adequate to prevent animal escapes for at least 29 big cats . The inspector wrote, “These enclosures are not tall enough to properly contain the animals ...” A recent inventory shows Noah’s Lost Ark has 72 big cats, 6 bears, 8 wolves, and 6 primates. ⁶⁵
Blacklick, Ohio	2011: A resident has 10 gibbons and two capuchin monkeys . ⁶⁶
Bolivar, Ohio	2009: A resident keeps three wolves . ⁶⁷
Bucyrus, Ohio	2006: A resident keeps pet black bears . ⁶⁸
Caldwell, Ohio	2005: Two pet monkeys escaped their cage. One was recaptured after running loose for several hours. The second, a rhesus macaque , attacked a 20-year-old man who stopped his truck in order to avoid hitting the monkey on the road. The monkey jumped in the truck and bit him on the leg. The man was treated at a hospital and received a tetanus shot. Ten days after escaping, the monkey remained on the loose. ⁶⁹ About 90 percent of adult macaques carry the herpes B virus. When transmitted to humans—typically through bites and scratches—herpes B causes severe neurological impairment and, in approximately 80 percent of cases, even death. ⁷⁰
Camp Dennison, Ohio	2006: A man died at the hospital after being strangled by his pet python . ⁷¹

Location	Incident
Chillicothe, Ohio	2004: A 28-year-old woman was hospitalized after she was attacked by one of her family's two adult pet lions . The lion slammed her against the cage and pulled her arm from its socket. The lion was shot and killed. ⁷²
Cleveland, Ohio	2012: A pet wolf , purchased on the Internet, escaped and roamed a neighborhood before being captured by animal control officers. A neighbor claimed that the wolf was regularly loose on the street and that he once saw the animal with a cat in his or her mouth. ^{73,74}
Cleveland, Ohio	2010: A man was keeping 3 lemurs, 2 servals, 1 lynx, and 6 coatimundis in filthy, unsanitary, and poorly maintained conditions at his home in a residential neighborhood. ⁷⁵
Cleveland, Ohio	2001: A man took his pet capuchin monkey to a Cleveland restaurant that he co-owned. The monkey was in the dining room playing with patrons when the animal was startled by something and attacked a diner. The monkey latched onto the woman's hands and bit and scratched her, inflicting 16 puncture wounds. The owner reportedly also took the monkey to local schools for demonstrations. ⁷⁶
Coolville, Ohio	2011: Elementary school officials expressed concern about a woman who regularly placed her Burmese python in a tree that was next door to the school. ⁷⁷
Covedale, Ohio	2008: A man called animal control when his 6-foot boa constrictor became aggressive during a nighttime feeding. Authorities helped find the snake a new home. ⁷⁸
Dayton, Ohio	2003: A Dayton firefighter who collected snakes and lizards died after he was bitten by his African rhino viper . ⁷⁹
Eaton, Ohio	2010: The USDA cited Valley Exotics for exhibiting a bear cub during the summer season without any experience or knowledge in handling this species of dangerous animal. ⁸⁰
Fremont, Ohio	2011: A 7-year-old pet grivet monkey escaped from a woman's home and attacked and scratched three children. Police fired two rounds during a nearly 3-hour chase throughout the neighborhood. The monkey was re-captured by the owner, who was later fined \$150 for allowing an animal to run at-large. ^{81,82}
Fredericksburg, Ohio, Ohio	2007: A resident pleaded guilty to federal felony charges for illegal wildlife trafficking for the sale of six endangered African leopards and was sentenced to one year of probation and fined \$2,000. ⁸³
Girard, Ohio	2007: A resident has had two monkeys for two years. ⁸⁴

Location	Incident
Girard, Ohio	2004: A pet capuchin monkey , recently purchased at an auction, escaped and journeyed through one township, one city and numerous rooftops. The animal was shocked by an electrical wire and fell 75 feet from a power line before being recaptured. ⁸⁵
Greenville, Ohio	2008: A resident looked for a new home for two tigers , a 3-year-old male and a 2-year-old female. ⁸⁶
Holland, Ohio	2009: Culbertson Feed exhibited 7 big cats, 1 bear, and 4 primates . ⁸⁷
Irondale, Ohio	2005: A resident purchased a pet tiger . ⁸⁸
Johnstown, Ohio	2010: The USDA cited Butternut Farm for failure to maintain two cougar enclosures that had openings large enough for the cougars to extend their paws and failure to provide a perimeter fence around an enclosure housing two bobcats and an enclosure containing a wolf. ⁸⁹
Lima, Ohio	2005: A man was attacked and bitten on the leg by his 160-pound pet cougar . ⁹⁰
Lykens Township, Ohio	2005: An African Gaboon viper went missing from a man who kept 60-70 snakes at his home and neighbors feared the snake was loose in the neighborhood. ⁹¹ Earlier in the year, the man was hospitalized after being bitten by his pet rhino viper . ⁹²
Marengo, Ohio	2008: One of three pet black bears escaped a chain-link enclosure and went to the home of a neighbor, who encountered the bear on his porch. The bear's owner shot the bear with a .22 caliber rifle when the 300- to 400-pound animal reared up and charged him. The bear was hit above the eye and fled into the woods. Deputies and an Ohio Division of Wildlife officer using night-vision goggles searched for the bear, who was shot and killed approximately an hour and a half later. ⁹³
Marengo, Ohio	2010: A resident kept a bear in a cage barely bigger than the size of the animal on the back of a trailer (see cover photo). ⁹⁴
Marshallville, Ohio	2001: A 4-year-old black bear attacked a 2-year-old boy who was climbing around the bear cage. After being bitten and clawed, the boy was rushed to the hospital, where he underwent reconstructive surgery to his calf. The bear was his grandfather's pet, and the family disposed of the bear after the incident. The bear had been purchased at the Mount Hope auction in Holmes County. ⁹⁵
Medina, Ohio	2010: Police found a boa constrictor on the loose. ⁹⁶
Medway, Ohio	2011: Neighbors expressed concern about a Syrian brown bear at Best Exotics, a facility that also has venomous snakes . ⁹⁷

Location	Incident
Metzger Marsh State Wildlife Area, Ohio	2007: A 7-foot African rock python was found in the Metzger Marsh State Wildlife Area. The animal was alive though it was 37 degrees and sleeting. ⁹⁸
Miami Township, Ohio	2000: A 5-year-old boy was killed by his grandmother’s pet wolf hybrid . ⁹⁹
Mt. Gilead, Ohio	2008: A nearly 500-pound pet black bear escaped and was subsequently shot and killed by a sheriff’s deputy after the animal attacked and bit the officer in the leg. The bear had a history of escapes and aggressive behavior. The deputy was treated at a local hospital for two puncture wounds. ¹⁰⁰
Mt. Orab, Ohio	2010: A cougar who had been purchased as a pet at a flea market escaped and remained on the loose a month later. ¹⁰¹
Mt. Perry, Ohio	2011: The county sheriff expressed concerns about the adequacy of cages housing four bears and four lions at a local residence. ¹⁰²
Muirfield, Ohio	2012: A resident has a capuchin monkey . ¹⁰³
New Carlisle, Ohio	2006: In response to concerns from citizens and emergency agencies about a resident keeping an adult pet cougar (who was not kept caged), the New Carlisle City Council passed an ordinance prohibiting ownership of exotic animals. The resident planned to move outside the city limits in order to keep the cougar. ¹⁰⁴
New Lexington, Ohio	2011: A family was barred from selling dogs as part of an agreement settling a lawsuit that accused them of selling sick animals. However, the settlement allowed them to keep and sell wolves and wolf-hybrids . ¹⁰⁵
New Marshfield, Ohio	2010: A resident rushed to obtain two young tigers before the state outlawed private ownership. ¹⁰⁶
Newark, Ohio	2012: A resident has two 8-month old lions living in his home and estimates there are “300 to 400 private owners of exotic animals in Muskingum and surrounding counties.” ¹⁰⁷
North College Hill, Ohio	2004: A 44-year-old woman who kept venomous and exotic pets was fatally bitten by a urutu pit viper in her home. The incident prompted comments that people who keep exotic and/or dangerous animals can put a strain on the local health care system. ^{108,109}
North Royalton, Ohio	2010: A 6-foot-long python was found at a picnic area. ¹¹⁰
Pataskala, Ohio	2012: A resident has a cougar, two servals, and a lemur among other exotic pets. ¹¹¹

Location	Incident
Piketon, Ohio	2007: One of two pet lions escaped from a cage and onto a nearby highway, where he chased and attacked passing cars. The State Highway Patrol and the Pike County Sheriff’s Department responded to the call. The owner ultimately lured the lion back to the cage. A Pike County Humane Agent inspected the property and found that the wood and wire cage where two lions were kept was caked with manure and littered with rotting animal carcasses. ^{112,113}
Powell, Ohio	2002: A 10-foot Burmese python escaped and was on the loose for approximately three weeks. The snake was found in a vacant home that was being renovated and had a telltale bulge in its middle. X-rays showed the snake had eaten a small canine, possibly a fox or stray dog. ¹¹⁴
Prospect, Ohio	2012: A resident has four bears and five tigers . ¹¹⁵
Ripley, Ohio	2010: A resident keeps pet bears in a corn crib behind his house in downtown Ripley. ¹¹⁶
Rock Creek, Ohio	2007: A resident looked for a new home for a 3-year-old black bear . ¹¹⁷
Rome, Ohio	2006: A woman was mauled by a 500-pound black bear who had escaped from a private menagerie. The bear forced his way into the woman’s home, knocked her to the floor, and attacked her. She sustained a bruised lung, a broken rib, a severe laceration on her head, significant damage to one ear, and lacerations and bites from the top of her head to her feet. The bear was shot and killed at the scene. ¹¹⁸
Scioto County, Ohio	2002: The Scioto County sheriff removed a badly neglected pet spider monkey from an elderly woman’s home. The monkey, who was near death, was rushed to Primate Rescue Center in Kentucky for treatment and permanent housing. ¹¹⁹
Sedamsville, Ohio	2011: A man discovered a 14-foot, 130-pound tiger reticulated python wandering loose outside his home. He captured the snake and contacted the SPCA. ¹²⁰
Sharon Center, Ohio	2007: The USDA filed an Order to Show Cause seeking to revoke Stephen Clark’s (dba Crossed Paws Ranch) USDA license because he allowed Sam Mazzola (see Fatal Attractions, Columbia Station) to exhibit under his license, despite having been told by the USDA that he could not do so. ¹²¹
Stark County, Ohio	2007: Following the death of two bear cubs , who the police chief believed may have died from dehydration, dozens of animals—including a lion cub —were confiscated from a resident’s home. Authorities said the animals were living in horribly filthy conditions with feces everywhere, a strong stench, and insufficient water. ^{122,123,124}

Location	Incident
Tiffin, Ohio	2012: A resident has five monkeys and a big cat . ¹²⁵
Uhrichsville, Ohio	2006: A 4-year-old boy was airlifted to the hospital after one of his fingers was bitten off at the first knuckle by his grandfather's black bear . ¹²⁶
Wapakoneta, Ohio	2011: Understanding Wildlife takes animals including a serval and primates to schools. ¹²⁷ Children are allowed to hold a large Burmese python. ¹²⁸
Whetstone Township, Ohio	2003: A chained 180-pound pet cougar snapped a collar, escaped, roamed a neighborhood, and attacked a neighbor's dog, causing more than 100 lacerations. ¹²⁹
Xenia Township Silvercreek Township, Ohio	2004: After three of ten pet black bears were discovered wandering on a local road by sheriff's deputies, a judge ordered all the bears to be removed from the property. Seven of the bears were subsequently transferred to a property in Silvercreek Township where one of them escaped from a three-sided barn and another judge then ordered all the bears seized. ^{130,131}

Footnotes and References

*Most inventories listed for “Ohio’s Fatal Attractions” were obtained from the most recent USDA inspection reports available online and only include USDA-regulated species that were impacted by the 2011 Executive Order (big cats, bears, non-human primates, and wolves). While HSUS made every effort to research news articles and review government documents to determine what facilities and individuals continue to possess dangerous wild animals, without state regulation, neither HSUS nor Ohio state officials know how many wild animals are held captive in the state and where they are located.

***Animal Finders’ Guide* is a trade publication that peddles exotic animals to breeders, dealers, hunting ranches, and the pet trade.

*** The Ohio Association of Animal Owners (OAAO) is an organization that endorses the private ownership of exotic animals as pets and that consistently opposes animal-welfare legislation. The deceptively-named Zoological Association of America (ZAA) supports the private ownership of exotic pets and the commercialization of wildlife. ZAA’s accreditation standards are weak, its caging and husbandry standards are sub-standard, and many of ZAA’s accredited facilities are poorly run roadside zoos and private menageries. Zoos such as the Columbus Zoo, Cleveland Zoo, Cincinnati Zoo, Akron Zoo, and Toledo Zoo are accredited by the well-established and highly respected Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

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