

Tiger Cub Incidents in the United States

The following is a partial list of incidents involving tiger cubs held captive by roadside zoos and traveling zoos in the United States since 2000. Tigers are repeatedly bred so that these enterprises have a constant supply of tiger cubs available to earn money through “encounter” sessions and photo opportunities in which people pay to hold and be photographed with the cubs. Since tiger cubs quickly grow to their adult size, which can be as much as 700 pounds, cubs can be used for photo opportunities only during their first few months of life, and they must be taken from their mother soon after birth in order to habituate them to humans. Some tiger cubs never make it to adulthood because of poor nutrition, illness, physical abuse, or neglect. As the cubs grow larger, they become too dangerous to interact with the public. The older cubs are replaced by younger ones and confined to cages or sent to roadside zoos. This cycle continually repeats itself, exacerbating the U.S. tiger crisis: There are far too many tigers and not enough responsible facilities to take them. Contact PETA for documentation.

September 21, 2015/Okeechobee, Florida: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) cited exhibitor Sue Pearce for failing to provide a tiger cub, who was found injured with a swollen neck and bite marks, with adequate veterinary care. Pearce called the attending veterinarian and described the injuries, and the vet prescribed treatment over the phone without having examined the cub. The cub’s condition deteriorated, and she died the following day.

September 13, 2015/Charlestown, Indiana: The USDA cited Wildlife in Need, Inc., for failing to handle tiger cubs properly. During “Tiger Playtime,” four 16-week-old tiger cubs weighing 35 to 40 pounds were allowed to interact with approximately 40 to 50 members of the public. Two of the cubs walked into the public area after the gate was opened, one cub who appeared to be asleep was dragged in by his front paws, and the fourth cub was pushed from behind. The cubs had no collars or leashes on them, and the attendants used a riding crop to swat their noses if they started to bite. The inspector noted, “The cubs were swatted frequently with the riding crops when the attendants were near them. Some of the swats were excessive in severity causing the cubs obvious discomfort.” Members of the public, including

an 8- or 9-year-old girl, were bitten in at least two different incidents.

Wildlife in Need was also cited for using these cubs every day for months in multiple sessions without sufficient breaks in between. The inspector noted, “The fact that these cubs are allowing the attendants to drag them around by their front legs, non-responsively, suggests they are exhausted and have no choice but to cope with the situation.” The cub who had been pulled into the room was pulled to other areas during the 30-minute session. He remained unresponsive and never stood. As the session progressed, two other cubs lay down to nap and then were also dragged around the room. At the end of the “playtime,” three of the cubs were dragged by their legs from the exhibit area, and the remaining awake cub was used for photo opportunities.

September 9, 2015/Calhan, Colorado: The USDA cited roadside zoo Serenity Springs Wildlife Center for failing to supply adequate veterinary care to a 7-week-old tiger cub who suffered from crusted hair and discharge from both eyes and was housed in an unsanitary enclosure with rodent feces and exposed drywall. The facility was also cited for failing to provide another sick tiger cub with timely veterinary care. En route to the veterinarian, the cub died from an underlying immune-system deficiency. Serenity Springs received an additional citation for failing to follow a veterinarian-approved diet plan, which required that tiger cubs receive calcium supplements. Two cubs were observed to have lameness and joint swelling, possibly caused by inadequate calcium in their diets.

August 5, 2015/Davenport, Iowa: During an inspection at the Mississippi Valley Fair, the USDA cited exhibitor Joe Schreiber for improper handling of a 19-day-old tiger cub who was being held alone, in view of the public, in a playpen-like enclosure with no secondary heating or cooling method for climate control. The inspector noted, “Animals this young in the absence of their parents are not able to adequately thermoregulate and exposure to temperatures which may be comfortable for adults may still be detrimental to the health of young cubs. Exposure to an excessive number of people and other animals at this young age poses a disease risk to the cub.”

August 4, 2015/Kingwood, West Virginia: The USDA cited roadside zoo Hovatter’s Wildlife Zoo for failing to handle tiger cubs properly. The cubs used in the facility’s photo shoots were too large, too strong, and too aggressive to engage in direct contact with the public. One tiger growled and used his claws to try to escape from the handler when the animal was moved from his or her cage.

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July 27, 2015/Charlestown, Indiana: The USDA cited Wildlife in Need, Inc., for failing to feed four 10-week-old tiger cubs properly. They were still on a formula diet but should have been provided meat starting at 2 to 3 weeks of age, and the majority of their diet should have been meat by 8 weeks of age.

July 17, 2015/Dade City, Florida: The USDA filed a complaint against roadside zoo Dade City's Wild Things for 20 alleged violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA), including four separate citations for failing to handle young tigers as carefully as possible in a manner that didn't cause behavioral stress, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort; two separate citations for using physical abuse to handle young tigers, including pulling their tails to restrain them and holding a tiger aloft by his neck; and two citations for "exposing young or immature tigers to rough or excessive handling and/or exhibiting them for periods of time that would be detrimental to their health or well-being" and for "exhibiting young tigers for periods of time and/or under conditions that were inconsistent with their good health and well-being."

June 4, 2015/Kingwood, West Virginia: The USDA cited Hovatter's Wildlife Zoo for failing to handle tiger cubs properly. The cubs were pulled from their mother at birth and were cared for in the licensee's home. At 2½ weeks old, they were used for public encounters, and at 5 weeks old (at the time of this inspection), the cubs had not been vaccinated—putting them at risk since they didn't have fully developed immune systems. Hovatter's was also cited for failing to have a nutritionally adequate feeding plan for the cubs.

May 23, 2015/Jamestown, Pennsylvania: The USDA cited roadside zoo Pymatuning Deer Park for failing to have a veterinarian-approved diet plan to ease two 6-week-old tiger cubs to solid food.

May 19, 2015/Natural Bridge, Virginia: The USDA cited roadside zoo Natural Bridge Zoo for failing to feed tiger cubs properly. Four cubs were born on April 9, 2015, and removed from their mother within one hour of birth. They were fed a diet that was inappropriate for their age and species. The one cub still remaining at the facility had a rough hair coat, prominent pelvis, and pot-bellied appearance.

January 6, 2015/Natural Bridge, Virginia: The USDA cited Natural Bridge Zoo for failing to handle tiger cubs carefully. The cubs were pulled from their mother at birth and put on display in the gift shop when 2 to 3 weeks old. They were then used in photo sessions when 3 to 4 weeks old, which exposed them to the public before they were immunocompetent. Natural Bridge Zoo was also cited for failing to handle tiger cubs properly. In one case, a cub who was too

big and strong for direct public contact was being used for photo opportunities.

December 5, 2014/Massillon, Ohio: The USDA cited Stump Hill Farm for interfering with an inspection by failing to report the possession of a juvenile tiger. The inspector asked the licensee multiple times in various ways about the presence of a juvenile tiger on the premises, and each time, the licensee responded that there were no young or juvenile tigers on the property. However, the attending veterinarian confirmed that his clinic had treated an injured tiger cub, Lilly, a few days earlier. The inspector returned to the property and told the licensee what he had learned. She confirmed that there was a cub and that "she had 'forgotten' about this tiger because it was housed in another enclosure on the property which was located away from where the other big cats were housed" in order to reduce stress and contamination.

The inspector also questioned the licensee about a specific enclosure between one containing an adult lion and another containing two adult tigers. The space in the fence was large enough for the big cats to injure any animal in the middle enclosure, so the inspector asked the licensee if animals were ever placed in that enclosure. The licensee said no but later during the inspection admitted to putting the tiger cub Lilly in there while staff cleaned her enclosure. Stump Hill was cited for placing Lilly in the enclosure near the other big cats. She had been injured in her primary enclosure, which resulted in a wound on her leg and the amputation of a toe. The licensee claimed that the injury occurred when Lilly got her paw stuck between metal piping and chewed on her own paw and leg in an attempt to free herself.

Stump Hill was also cited for failing to have the record of acquisition for Lilly at the time of the inspection.

September 13, 2014/Calhan, Colorado: The USDA cited Serenity Springs Wildlife Center for improperly handling an 8-week-old tiger cub by allowing the public to handle him for at least six hours in one day with no documented breaks. During this long public encounter, the cub uttered vocalizations indicating distress numerous times.

September 11, 2014/Tuttle, Oklahoma: The USDA cited roadside zoo Tiger Safari for failing to supply adequate veterinary care to a 16-week-old white tiger cub who had skin lesions but had not been examined by a veterinarian.

August 19, 2014/Charlestown, Indiana: During a USDA inspection of roadside zoo Wildlife in Need, Inc., inspectors observed several incidents that took place during "Tiger Playtime," when approximately 30

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members of the public sat in an enclosed area and were allowed to interact freely with two tiger cubs. An attendee was pawed and mouthed in the face, one child was bitten on the top of his thigh, another child was grabbed from behind and both sides of his or her head and ears were mouthed by a cub, and one of the inspectors was bitten on the back, resulting in broken skin and bleeding.

August 11, 2014/Greensburg, Indiana: The USDA cited Stapp Circle S Ranch for improper feeding of a 9-week-old tiger cub, who was fed only meat without additional calcium or vitamin supplements. Lack of calcium can lead to metabolic bone disease in cubs and cause fractures and painful bone conditions.

March 18, 2014/Naples, Florida: The USDA cited exhibitor Patrick Clancy for failing to feed a nutritionally complete diet and supply adequate veterinary care to a tiger cub who was walking with a limp. She was being exhibited at the Collier County Fair.

March 10, 2014/Branson, Missouri: The USDA cited roadside zoo Promised Land Zoo for failing to have an employee who had been approved by the USDA for the care and handling of exhibited big cats to oversee the adult lion and 7-week-old tiger cub displayed at the facility.

March 10, 2014/Miller, Missouri: The USDA cited Hostetler Wildlife Farms for failing to provide tiger cubs with adequate veterinary care. Three cubs were born in January, and according to the facility representative, one “got a little cold and the mother may have sat on it.” The cub wasn’t taken to a veterinarian. Hostetler was also cited for improper handling of a tiger cub born in mid-January who was transported to another facility on January 31. This cub had health concerns, including illness and possible injury, from the date of his birth, and the facility representative at the destination site stated that “there was something wrong with that cub.”

January 17, 2014/Charlestown, Indiana: The USDA cited Wildlife in Need, Inc., for failing to handle animals properly. The tiger cubs used in the “Tiger Baby Playtime” event were approximately 15 to 16 weeks old. The licensee admitted that people had been scratched and nipped during the exhibitions and that he told visitors to smack the tigers on the nose if they got too rough. He said that some people didn’t hit the tigers hard enough and that if he needed to step in, he would. The inspector noted that these cubs were “too large, too strong and aggressive” and that the licensee must stop using them for direct-contact exhibitions.

September 25, 2013/Naubinway, Michigan: The USDA cited roadside zoo GarLyn Zoo for failing to have an employee with experience or training in handling tigers in direct control of a tiger cub being used for pictures with the public.

August 9, 2013/Denver, Colorado: While exhibiting at the Denver County Fair, Serenity Springs Wildlife Center was cited by the USDA for failing to restrain a 7-week-old tiger cub properly during a photo shoot with the public. The cub was vocalizing and squirming, and the employee didn’t properly handle the cub in order to minimize the risk of harm to the animal and the public.

June 11, 2013/Calhan, Colorado: The USDA noted on an inspection report for Joe Schreibvogel, operator of G.W. Exotic Animal Memorial Foundation, that it was reviewing an incident that involved the transportation of two tiger cubs and their subsequent death on or around May 10, 2013. (See May 23, 2013/Calhan, Colorado.)

May 23, 2013/Calhan, Colorado: The USDA cited Serenity Springs Wildlife Center for failing to follow the attending veterinarian’s instructions to monitor a tiger in labor, leading to the death of the tiger and the single cub during birth. In addition, the USDA cited Serenity Springs for failing to handle two 3-day-old tiger cubs properly. They were acquired from another facility, and one died within 24 hours of arriving at Serenity Springs. Two days after arriving at Serenity Springs, the second cub was unable to pass feces and was euthanized.

May 6, 2013/Calhan, Colorado: The USDA cited Serenity Springs Wildlife Center for a repeat violation for failing to provide two lame tiger cubs with veterinary care. During an inspection to check the condition of a tiger cub previously identified to be severely lame and unable to bear weight on his right front limb, the inspector observed that the cub had a severe limp, wouldn’t bear weight on his right hind leg, and had noticeable swelling of the ankle area. Another cub was also severely limping on his right hind leg and had swelling around the ankle area. The cub would only hop a short distance before falling to the ground.

April 18, 2013/Calhan, Colorado: The USDA cited Serenity Springs Wildlife Center for a repeat violation for failing to provide a tiger cub with adequate veterinary care. The cub was previously observed to have a severe limp, and during this inspection, the limp affecting the right front leg appeared to be worse. The cub wouldn’t bear weight on the paw and struggled to get to the food dish in the enclosure.

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April 10, 2013/Calhan, Colorado: The USDA cited Serenity Springs Wildlife Center for failing to provide a tiger cub with adequate veterinary care. He was observed to have a severe limp affecting his right front leg, causing him to stumble and fall onto his shoulder. He was also seen walking with a crab-like posture with his hind legs and appeared to be in pain. This condition had not been noted by any of the staff members or reported to the veterinarian.

March 28, 2013/Troutman, North Carolina: The USDA cited roadside zoo Zootastic Park of Lake Norman for improperly handling a white tiger cub weighing approximately 40 pounds. A customer was allowed to lie face-to-face on the floor with the cub, who apparently bit the man on the nose.

February 28, 2013/Litchfield Park, Arizona: The USDA cited roadside zoo Wildlife World Zoo for allowing a 3-month-old tiger cub to run through a local television studio. The inspector noted that the cub was seen biting the clothing of an offstage handler while the lead handler was seen with scratches and bite marks on his arms. The host of the television program was also seen pulling on the tiger's tail.

January 24, 2013/Chicago, Illinois: The USDA cited traveling exhibitor Jo-Don Farms for failing to have barriers in place to protect a tiger cub and the public during a photo event.

October 23, 2012/Seattle, Washington: The USDA cited Steve Higgs for improperly handling a juvenile tiger. An onlooker was able to get close enough to touch the tiger's face.

May 21, 2012/Wynnewood, Oklahoma: The USDA cited G.W. Exotic Animal Memorial Foundation for improperly handling animals. The report stated that the facility's handling techniques were under review.

May 21, 2012/Wynnewood, Oklahoma: The USDA cited Beth Corley for improperly handling animals. The report stated that the handling practices for large felid cubs were under review.

December 1, 2011/Wynnewood, Oklahoma: According to a USDA inspection report, a 3-month-old tiger cub who was being exhibited on a leash at G.W. Exotic Animal Memorial Foundation jumped on a small child and knocked him down. The child was scratched as a result.

November 28, 2011/Cincinnati, Ohio: After visiting a tiger exhibit at Northgate Mall run by Joe Schreibvogel, operator of G.W. Exotic Animal Memorial Foundation, *Inside Edition* noted that it cost shoppers \$55 to play with tiger cubs in a pen and

have a picture taken with a cub. The 8-week-old cub that the reporter petted and posed with barely moved and was obviously sick. When asked about the sick cub, the exhibit employee replied, "I don't know. Maybe he's just tired or stressed." Another cub was missing a patch of fur and appeared distressed while posing for pictures.

September 14, 2011/Dade City, Florida: The USDA cited Dade City's Wild Things for failing to handle a tiger cub properly. During a "tiger swim session," a cub was reluctant to move to the edge of the pool, and the handler pulled him by the leash. The cub showed signs of distress by vocalizing and moving around when he was handled in the pool. After swimming a short distance, he then swam toward the handler who was at the wall of the pool and extended his paws, apparently wanting to get out. Instead of pulling him out of the water and stopping the encounter, the handler prevented the cub from exiting and continued the swim session.

July 7, 2011/Larkspur, Colorado: While exhibiting animals at the Colorado Renaissance Festival, Serenity Springs Wildlife Center was cited by the USDA for failing to restrain a tiger cub properly during a public performance.

June 9, 2011/Okeechobee, Florida: The USDA cited Animal Adventures for improperly handling tiger cubs who were removed from their mother shortly after birth and deprived of natural nursing opportunities and colostrum. One tiger cub developed aspiration pneumonia and died. The remaining cubs were housed in the licensee's living room next to three dogs and exposed to multiple people, which increased the risk of disease for the immunologically compromised cubs.

March 18, 2011: The USDA cited Robert Engesser, owner of The Zoo (aka "Jungle Safari"), a traveling zoo based in Florida, for using a "highly active" 16-week-old tiger cub in public photo sessions. The handler said that he would replace the tiger with another younger cub because the current cub was getting more active.

June 8, 2010: The USDA cited the now-defunct traveling big-cat exhibitor ZooCats, Inc., for failing to provide several tigers with adequate veterinary care. A tiger died during dystocia (obstructed labor), and according to the licensee, she received no veterinary care prior to or during the dystocia. No necropsy was performed, and the licensee stated that the attending veterinarian felt it was not necessary since the dystocia probably resulted from genetic predisposition. Soon after this tiger's death, another tiger aborted cubs. She, too, received no veterinary care during or after the birth, and no necropsies were

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performed. Yet another white tiger had given birth approximately three weeks earlier to three cubs. The licensee said one was born dead. The inspector noted the significant number of unexplained tiger cub deaths at this facility and that the “circumstances indicate that violations of the AWA, such as previously documented inadequate diets may have contributed to these deaths.”

June 2, 2010/Wynnewood, Oklahoma: An AllVoices.com article reported that 23 tiger cubs died over a seven-month period at G.W. Exotic Animal Memorial Foundation. According to the article, operator Joe Schreiber claimed that the cubs died as a result of being fed a tainted kitten formula. The Food and Drug Administration tested samples that the park provided it but detected no salmonella or *Cronobacter sakazakii* in them. The USDA opened an investigation into the deaths.

January 1, 2008/Wynnewood, Oklahoma: G.W. Exotic Animal Memorial Foundation ran an ad in *Animal Finders' Guide*, a trade publication for exotic animal breeders and dealers, offering to give away free 10- to 12-week-old tiger cubs, yearlings, and adults, noting that they had all been bottle-fed from the day they were born.

June 1, 2007/Wynnewood, Oklahoma: G.W. Exotic Animal Memorial Foundation ran an ad in *Animal Finders' Guide* offering to give away free 12-week-old tigers.

May 31, 2007/Boonsboro, Maryland: The USDA cited the now-defunct Charlotte Metro Zoo for failing to give adequate rest breaks to the tiger cubs it exhibited at a carnival. Although the tiger cubs were kept in a penned area to rest, members of the public were allowed to come into the pen or lean over the sides to pet them.

October 5, 2006/Shelby, North Carolina: The USDA cited the now-defunct Charlotte Metro Zoo for failing to protect tiger cubs from diseases. Members of the public were allowed to pet the cubs at the Cleveland County Fair, and the Charlotte Metro Zoo allowed the cubs to suck on customers' hands, which they were not required to wash beforehand.

February 12, 2005/Oldsmar, Florida: A woman was bitten on the hand by a tiger cub used by the now-defunct traveling exhibitor Zoo Dynamics for photo opportunities at an automobile dealership.

January 8, 2005/Cleveland County, North Carolina: Two 6-month-old injured tiger cubs, weighing approximately 80 to 100 pounds each, were

abandoned and found wandering on the side of a road.

August 30, 2004/Kaufman, Texas: The USDA cited now-defunct ZooCats, Inc., for failing to have the attending veterinarian conduct an annual site visit and review the plan of veterinary care. The inspector noted that the two youngest tigers and the smallest of the lions displayed protruding hip bones and dull hair coats, conditions of great concern.

August 19, 2004/Owatonna, Minnesota: The USDA cited now-defunct Arcangel Wildlife for failing to ensure that a 6-week-old tiger cub used for photo shoots at the Steele County fairground was being properly handled. The inspector noted that the cub was the only one being used, and people of all ages were allowed to hold him.

July 30, 2004/Kaufman, Texas: The USDA cited now-defunct ZooCats, Inc., for failing to supply adequate veterinary care to several 3- to 6-month-old tiger cubs who weren't being given supplements and were “thin in appearance to the point of the hip bone of these animals protruding.” In addition, the inspector stated, “Also the hair coats of these animals are dull in appearance.” The facility was also cited for offering the cats food every other day rather than daily as required.

May 7, 2004/Rockwell, North Carolina: A USDA inspector cited the now-defunct Charlotte Metro Zoo for improperly handling a 2-week-old tiger cub after seeing the cub being handled for approximately one hour by at least 12 people. The animal was allowed to rest—but in direct sunlight and for only 15 minutes. He was panting, and his skin tented when he was lifted, indicating that he may have been getting dehydrated. The outside temperature was 91 degrees, and the temperature of the table surface that he rested on was 93 degrees.

April 16, 2004/Kaufman, Texas: The USDA cited now-defunct ZooCats, Inc., for failing to provide two 4-month-old tiger cubs, who were very thin and exhibited dry coats, with adequate veterinary care. They had not been seen by the attending veterinarian since they were approximately 30 days old. ZooCats was also cited for keeping four approximately 6-month-old tiger cubs in temporary housing that wasn't large enough to provide each animal with comfortable protection from the elements.

November 8, 2003/Frisco, Texas: A 4-month-old, 50-pound, declawed tiger cub was abandoned and captured by police after a motorist spotted the animal roaming on the side of the road.

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September 13, 2003/Rockwell, North Carolina: The USDA cited the now-defunct Charlotte Metro Zoo for improperly handling animals at the Cabarrus County Fair in Concord, North Carolina. Children and other members of the public were allowed to hold and pet a 4½-month-old tiger without sufficient safety measures to ensure minimal risk of harm to the public.

suffering from metabolic bone disease caused by the lack of a proper diet.

March 22, 2003/Red Wing, Minnesota: A 5-month-old, 40-pound tiger cub at now-defunct Grant Oly's Tiger Zone bit a 16-year-old girl and grabbed and bit a pregnant woman on the wrist, causing a puncture wound. Police searching Oly's premises found guns, ammunition, and marijuana.

January 24, 2003/Albert Lea, Minnesota: A malnourished tiger cub was seized from a home in a residential neighborhood after school officials learned that scratches and bite marks on a fifth-grade boy were caused by his father's "pet" tiger.

October 28, 2002/Las Vegas, Nevada: Neighbors became frightened and alerted animal control when they spotted two tiger cubs running loose on a neighbor's rooftop. The cubs had escaped from the homeowner's private menagerie.

July 22, 2002/Plano, Texas: The USDA cited now-defunct ZooCats, Inc., for failing to give water to two cougar cubs, five tiger cubs, and a bear cub who were all kept in an animal trailer. According to the caretaker, the animals had last been offered water 12 hours earlier.

October 27, 2000/Massillon, Ohio: According to the *Akron Beacon Journal*, Stump Hill Farm leased a declawed tiger cub to Massillon High School's football team to serve as a "mascot." During the months he was kept at the high school, the tiger was held in a garage between exhibits.

October 10, 2000/Charlotte, North Carolina: According to the *Salisbury Post*, a 4-month-old leopard and a 5-month-old tiger escaped from a car when Steve Macaluso, owner of the now-defunct Charlotte Metro Zoo, lost control of his vehicle and crashed while returning from a photo shoot. The cubs were later captured.

September 10, 2000/Albuquerque, New Mexico: A tiger cub bit a man during a photo opportunity at the New Mexico State Fair.

August 17, 2000/Horseheads, New York: The USDA cited Robert Engesser, owner of The Zoo (aka "Jungle Safari"), a traveling zoo based in Florida, for failing to give proper veterinary care to a tiger cub