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November 19, 2007

Cecil O. Samuelson, President  
Brigham Young University  
D-346 ASB  
Provo, Utah 84602  
Fax: (801) 422-0686

Dear President Samuelson:

I am writing on behalf of the more than 10 million members and constituents of The Humane Society of the United States, including our 44,628 members and constituents in Utah, and our international arm, Humane Society International, to express our deep concern about Brigham Young University's Monte L. Bean Life Science Museum's order to kill a southern white rhino for display in the museum, as reported in the Nov. 14 edition of *The Salt Lake Tribune*.

Killing animals for museum exhibition is not acceptable in our day, especially when the target is one of the rarest large mammals in the world. The founders of the Church of Latter Day Saints taught that animals should be treated with kindness and respect, and this action is at odds with the principles of compassionate care of animals. Brigham Young acknowledged, "if we maltreat our animals, or each other, the spirit within us, our traditions, and the Bible, all agree in declaring it is wrong" (JD 1: 336-337). Joseph Smith often wrote of our responsibilities as stewards of the earth and spoke strongly against the needless killing of animals. In his journal, he wrote, "I do not believe any man should kill animals unless he needs them for food..." (J148 [May1913] 308-309).

Museums can obtain specimens through other means—such as through specimen exchange with other museums—rather than asking hunters to kill wild animals solely for the purpose of public display. While this practice was common a century ago, it is no longer common and most reputable museums pursue other strategies for obtaining specimens.

According to the story, the hunter, Fred Morris, one of the museum's benefactors, was "recruited" by the museum to hunt the white rhino at South Africa's Mkuze National Park. According to the story, "he has hunted in 160 countries and has filled his Draper residence with 400 birds and animals he has shot." The fact that he is also a benefactor of the museum calls into question the motives for the museum's request for him to kill the rhino.

Trophy hunters also enjoy competing with one another in contests sponsored by hunting organizations such as Safari Club International, to see who can kill the most number of animals of a particular type (e.g., Bears of the World), or who can kill

*Celebrating Animals, Confronting Cruelty*

animals with the largest horns or other body measurements. Many wealthy trophy hunters have sought out relationships with museum curators and other personnel and they make donations in return for securing a place to display their trophies. The HSUS exposed a tax scam in recent years where hunters were donating their taxidermied trophies to museums and securing tax write-offs, which allowed them to finance more international trophy hunting gambits.

Stuffed and mounted hunting trophies have limited educational value and have no value to scientific research. Educational and research values should form the foundation of university museum donation policies; university museums should not serve as a repository for the spoils of the hunt by wealthy museum benefactors.

We are deeply concerned about the reported intention of the museum to acquire additional skins of large animals from Africa. The story quotes Wesley “Skip” Skidmore, a museum collection manager, as saying: “I also want a hippopotamus and a life-sized giraffe.”

Therefore, we request the university to, as a matter of urgency:

- halt preparation for public display of the white rhino killed by Mr. Morris;
- instruct the museum to suspend the acquisition of additional trophy hunted specimens;
- conduct a thorough investigation into the process by which Mr. Morris was requisitioned by the museum to kill a white rhino;
- provide a full public accounting that addresses the ethical questions raised in this letter; and
- adopt museum policies that address the ethical questions raised in this letter; at a minimum, we recommend that a policy be adopted that “under no circumstances whatsoever may any trapped or hunted vertebrate animal be introduced into BYU research or teaching facilities except when collected as part of scientific research approved by the BYU Animal Use and Care Committee. All such collecting shall reflect the University’s commitment to preserve and guard the living heritage of the earth and to the humane and ethical treatment of animals.”

Thank you for considering our concerns. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Wayne Pacelle  
President & CEO