

Fact Sheet

Ohio's Fatal Attractions

This 25-page report presents a current and historical overview of some of the worst facilities known to keep dangerous wild animals in Ohio. Some of the 14 “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 and, in fact, many unqualified facilities and individuals across the state possess, breed, and sell these animals.

“Ohio’s Fatal Attractions” are facilities that are known to have had attacks that resulted in death or serious injury to people, recent federal citations for unsafe caging of dangerous animals, repeat and serious Animal Welfare Act violations that directly impact animal welfare, and/or U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) enforcement actions that resulted in license revocation, penalties, and/or official warnings. 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 included in the report and covers nearly 40 communities throughout the state.



A Marengo resident's pet black bear

Based on our compilation of news articles and government documents since 1990, Ohio ranks fourth among the 50 states in dangerous incidents involving big cats, bears, and non-human primates that resulted in injury and death.

In the wake of news that Gov. John Kasich will not extend an emergency order promulgated by former Governor Ted Strickland just before his term ended, **the HSUS is calling on Kasich to move quickly to issue regulations that will restrict the sale and possession of dangerous wild animals—specifically big cats, bears, wolves, non-human primates, large constricting and venomous snakes, and crocodilians**—otherwise, Ohio will continue to be one of the fewer than 10 states with virtually no regulation of private ownership of dangerous wild animals.

“Ohio’s Fatal Attractions” report provides detailed information on the following facilities:

Flores, Jose and Denise/Tiger Paw Exotic Rescue Center of Ohio (Ashland) - Neighbors expressed concern about living near dangerous wild animals when the Flores moved in with five adult tigers. The tigers initially lived in cramped cages in the basement. This facility has been cited by the USDA for unsafe caging.

Mazzola, Sam/World Animal Studios (Columbia Station) - Despite the loss of his USDA license, Ohio’s lack of regulations allowed Mazzola to keep exotic animals, and in August 2010, a 24-year-old man was attacked and killed by a 500-pound black bear at Mazzola’s facility. Mazzola continues to possess bears, tigers, and wolves.

Pearson, Lorenza/L & L Exotic Animal Farm (Copley Township) – Pearson’s 2-year-old son was killed by his pet tiger in 1983. For more than eight years, local officials 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. His USDA license was finally revoked in 2007.

Cziraky, Diana/Siberian Tiger Foundation (Gambier) – Nearly a dozen people were injured during “close encounters” with big cats at this facility and the USDA revoked its license in 2002. Taxpayers picked up the tab for seizing and relocating the animals in 2007 when the owner was evicted from the property.



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Harter, Angela/Rescue One (Lancaster) – The USDA cited Rescue One for unsafe caging, unsanitary feeding practices, and failure to separate three incompatible tigers, resulting in a violent fight that lasted for 30 minutes. Although no longer USDA licensed, as of December 21, 2010, Rescue One had 11 tigers, 6 lions, 1 black bear, and 3 cougars.

Matt and Chris Joseph (Lisbon) – The USDA cited Joseph’s facility for failure to maintain the barrier between animals and the public to assure the safety of the public after a 10-year-old girl was repeatedly bitten on the arm by a cougar. The girl was rushed to a local hospital and then had to be airlifted to Children’s Hospital in Pittsburgh to handle her injuries.

Crabtree, Katherine/Hill Top Farm (Lucasville) – The USDA cited Hill Top Farm for failure to provide vet care to sick and underweight animals, failure to inform the veterinarian of animal deaths, and filthy cages. According to one inspection report, a bear was “screaming in pain” and had bone and tendons protruding through the skin after he was attacked by a tiger in an adjacent cage. The bear had to be euthanized.

Huntsman, Lee and Cyndi/Stump Hill Farm (Massilon) – The USDA cited Stump Hill Farm for unsafe handling and unsafe caging of dangerous animals, failure to provide veterinary care, repeated failure to provide environment enrichment to promote the psychological well-being of primates, and inadequate perimeter fence to serve as secondary containment in the event of escapes (neighbors report dangerous animals have allegedly escaped).

Burnette, Jim/Burnette's Farm and Education Center (Olmstead Falls) – The USDA repeatedly cited Burnette for failure to provide veterinary care to sick, seriously underweight, and dying animals and not informing the veterinarian of animal deaths, failure to provide adequate shelter and drinking water during below freezing temperatures, failure to provide adequate food to least 43 animals, and filthy enclosures. A girl was scratched by a macaque and a worker was mauled by a tiger at this facility.

Hetrick, Kenneth/Tiger Ridge Exotics (Perrysburg) – The USDA cited Tiger Ridge for repeated failure to provide enclosures that could safely contain lions and wolves, who “could easily jump out.” Fencing was weakly secured to structural supports with only flimsy plastic zip ties or rope, re-capture equipment was determined to be useless, and there were inadequate public barriers for big cats. The owner has been mauled by two grizzly bears.

Vierstra, Cyril/Bethsaida Farms (Radcliff) – The USDA cited Bethsaida Farms for unsafe caging, insufficient perimeter fence, and failure to provide a nutritional diet. The agency issued an Official Warning for repeat violations of failing to provide adequate veterinary care and failure to maintain records of acquisition.

Coburn, Bill/Wild Acres Ranch (Sandusky) – The USDA cited Wild Acres for using an unvaccinated 3½-week-old tiger cub for more than 50 photos with the public in a 3-day period, for housing a 6-week-old tiger cub in an overheated enclosure with a 110-degree cement floor and only a plastic dog kennel as shelter from the sun, and housing bear cubs in transport cages inside a garage cluttered with a gas grill, gasoline, a lawn mower, and a car.

Sawmiller, Robert/Wildlife on Wheels (Wapakoneta) - In five inspections conducted in 2010 and 2011 that produced 23 pages of serious violations, the USDA repeatedly cited this facility for unsafe animal handling, failure to provide veterinary care, failure to provide adequate shelter during below-freezing temperatures, and failure to maintain enclosures to prevent escapes. The agency issued an Official Warning on January 19, 2011.

McGuire, Kord/Heaven's Corner (West Alexandria) – The USDA cited Heaven’s Corner for unsafe caging, failure to have a veterinarian-approved feeding plan for big cats, failure to have a complete program of veterinary care, and failure to provide environment enrichment to promote the psychological well-being of primates. The owner has been attacked by cougar.



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