

May 18, 2017

Elizabeth Goldentyer, D.V.M.  
 Director, Animal Welfare Operations  
 USDA/APHIS/AC Eastern Region

Via e-mail: [REDACTED] [aceast@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:aceast@aphis.usda.gov)

Re: Request for Investigation of Apparent Animal Welfare Act Violations by  
 Tim Stark, dba "Wildlife in Need" (License No. 32-C-0204)

Dear Dr. Goldentyer,

I'm writing on behalf of PETA to request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) urgently inspect Tim Stark, dba "Wildlife in Need" (license no. 32-C-0204), for the abusive handling of a 14-week-old bear cub in violation of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and confiscate this bear.

On Friday, May 12, a witness documented that Tim Stark presented a bear cub to the audience of a so-called "Tiger Baby Playtime" event in which various species of animals—mostly infants and juveniles—were mishandled, taunted, and provoked for the public's apparent amusement. The cub screamed in terror throughout the presentation. At one point, he dangled her by the mouth from his hand. (See [Video 1](#).) Lifting the cub by her mouth in this manner poses a grave risk of damage to her developing teeth and to the muscles in her skull and neck. There is also a risk of severe injury if she were to let go and fall to the ground.

Stark eventually pried the cub's mouth off his hand and held her toward the audience. The cub screamed in terror and urinated on him, likely from distress. Her ears were back, indicating fear and distress, and her eyes were rolled back to the whites, which is a well-known sign of distress in all mammals. He then placed his hand in front of her mouth and she bit with great force, indicating a "fight" response as a reaction to the extreme stress and her inability to flee, which would be a cub's typical stress response.

Stark appeared to be taunting the bear intentionally to solicit this fear response and entertain his audience. (See [Video 2](#).) He wore thick gloves on both hands, indicating that this response is typical and expected. This bear cub first arrived at Wildlife in Need on April 14, according to a report from a witness who attended a playtime on that day. Stark holds these playtime events for multiple hours every Friday through Sunday, and we believe that he has exhibited and abused this bear cub at each such exhibition.

As the USDA has noted during previous undercover inspections of "Tiger Baby Playtime," Stark has a history of physically abusing animals:

PEOPLE FOR  
 THE ETHICAL  
 TREATMENT  
 OF ANIMALS  
 FOUNDATION

Washington, D.C.  
 1536 16th St. N.W.  
 Washington, DC 20036  
 202-483-PETA

Los Angeles  
 2154 W. Sunset Blvd.  
 Los Angeles, CA 90026  
 323-644-PETA

Norfolk  
 501 Front St.  
 Norfolk, VA 23510  
 757-622-PETA

Oakland  
 554 Grand Ave.  
 Oakland, CA 94610  
 510-763-PETA

PETA FOUNDATION IS AN  
 OPERATING NAME OF FOUNDATION  
 TO SUPPORT ANIMAL PROTECTION.

AFFILIATES:

- PETA U.S.
- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
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- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

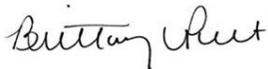
- On January 17, 2014, he told inspectors that he instructed members of the public to "smack the tigers" but that sometimes they don't "hit the tigers hard enough."<sup>1</sup>
- On August 20, 2014, inspectors noted that during a playtime, Stark had deliberately "pissed off" a tiger cub by "grabbing her by the scruff and bouncing her up and down on his lap and the ground while the tiger hissed, growled, and bit at his glove-covered hands."<sup>2</sup>
- On September 13, 2015, inspectors noted that Stark's attendants swatted the tiger cubs "frequently" in the face with riding crops and that "some of the swats were excessive in severity, causing the cubs obvious discomfort." The USDA cited him for causing "unnecessary discomfort, pain, and suffering to the animal[s]" in violation of 9 C.F.R. § 2.131(b)(2)(i), which prohibits exhibitors from using physical abuse to train, work, or handle animals.<sup>3</sup>

The evidence indicates that plainly this bear cub is experiencing terror and extreme distress as a result of Stark's apparently routine abuse of her, which **will** have long-lasting physical and psychological effects if she is not urgently removed from his custody. His history of physical abuse when handling animals further underscores the necessity of the confiscation of this cub. PETA stands ready to assist in identifying an appropriate sanctuary for this bear and arranging for her safe transport.

Please exercise the USDA's authority under the AWA to confiscate the cub. Please also hold Stark fully accountable for any and all violations that you discover during your investigation, including but not limited to 9 C.F.R. § 2.131(b)(2)(i), as well as (c)(3) and (d)(1), which require that "[y]oung or immature animals shall not be exposed to rough or excessive public handling or exhibited for periods of time which would be detrimental to their health or well-being" and "[a]nimals shall be exhibited only for periods of time and under conditions consistent with their good health and well-being."

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. Please inform me of the complaint number that you assign to this correspondence.

Very truly yours,



Brittany Peet, Esq.  
Director, Captive Animal Law Enforcement

cc: Nicolette Petervary, V.M.D., Regional Animal Care Specialist, USDA/APHIS/AC

Andrea D'Ambrosio, Animal Care Inspector, USDA/APHIS/AC

<sup>1</sup>See USDA Inspection Report, Tim Stark (license no. 32-C-0204), dated January 17, 2014.

<sup>2</sup>See USDA Inspection Report, Tim Stark (license no. 32-C-0204), dated August 20, 2014.

<sup>3</sup>See USDA Inspection Report, Tim Stark (license no. 32-C-0204), dated September 13, 2015.