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Captive Exotic Cats and Public Safety... The Numbers Don't Lie !!...



REXANO Editorial, www.REXANO.org

Las Vegas, NV (12/29/2007)--As expected, the December 25, 2007 fatal, extremely rare and isolated, tiger attack at the San Francisco Zoo is being sensationalized and used by extreme animal rights (AR) activists to incite public fear and hysteria toward captive keeping of exotics.

In the past, it was just the private owners of captive big cats, pet tigers especially, being banned and coming under ever increasing attacks from the media bandwagon, mostly fueled by the agenda of the animal rights (AR) activists groups. Lately, major AZA zoos, who in the past were more than happy to help AR in their slandering of private sector, are coming under the same attack.

Under the guise of pretending to care for public safety and using well meaning, but uninformed grieving relatives of the exotic cat attack victims as their pawns, extreme AR groups hide their real agenda: to end the captive keeping of all animals.

The best method of discrediting the claims of big cats being a public safety issue and to show no need for additional regulation is to look at the real numbers, facts don't lie.

According to various news sources and reports, 19 people were fatally mauled by captive big cats in the USA in the last 17 years (between 1990 and 2007), which is one death per year (1.11).

One fatality was by leopard, one by jaguar, 2 by lions and 14 by tigers. (The 19th death was an apparent suicide of a woman climbing into lions' cage at the AZA accredited [The American Zoo and Aquarium Association] National Zoo at Washington DC).

One of the tigers is responsible for the deaths of 2 people, its female owner and male handler. None of these deaths were the result of the exotic cats off the private owners' or zoo property. Instead, all victims were voluntarily on the property where the animal was kept, be it owner(s), handlers, employees, friends or visitors wanting to see the animals.

Cases Breakdown:

- four fatalities at AZA zoos (1 visitor, 2 keepers, 1 suicidal woman claiming into lions' cage)
- one teenager voluntarily posing for pictures, famous [Haley's act](#) (where were the parents?)
- three kids, younger than teens, killed by family/relative's big cat (again, parent's responsibility)
- two fatalities, adults, cats belonged to their close friend or family member
- NINE were private owners/trainers/handlers/employees/circus performers = Voluntarily Accepted Occupational Hazard

TOTAL:

19 dead, 11 of them were occupational/hobby hazard, (2 AZA zoo workers and 9 trainers/owners).

(AZA is a private accrediting group, so far always exempted from bans).

The odds of being killed by a captive big cat are therefore extremely low. With the current US population being almost 302,000,000 with one death occurring every 13-14 seconds, this translates to approximately 2,440,000 total US deaths per year. With this in mind, the alleged threat of big cats posing a public safety issue seems ridiculous with the yearly odds of being killed by a captive big cat being one in 302,000,000 equaling to one fatal mauling per year.

You have a better chance of winning the lottery Jackpot (1 in 13,983,816, all six winning numbers selected) or even the elusive Mega Millions Lottery jackpot (1 in 175,711,536), than being killed by a captive large cat (1 in 302,000,000). But you must visit someone with a large cat to get those odds. Animal Rights groups demand more regulation and/or banning ownership and exhibition of big cats in the name of public safety. The odds just don't add up.

More people have died from a runaway NASCAR vehicle than a runaway (escaped) big cat. Shouldn't we ban racecars?

According to Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2001 killed 37,862 people, of which 4,901 were pedestrians.

Also, wild tigers kill on average 40-60 people per year, even though estimates suggest there are easily more than 5 times as many captive US tigers that the entire wild population.

Even though there is no recorded fatal mauling attributed to the captive mountain lions, there is an increase in fatal wild cougar maulings in the USA, but we don't see the AR groups supporting population control of these animals to save human lives, just the opposite. These organizations oppose any form of animal hunting, even for overpopulation control.

Assuming responsible exotic animal owners with proper caging, a perimeter fence to keep the animals in and the curious public out and to avoid easy trespassing, the best method to avoid being killed by a captive big cat is to simply avoid the properties where they are being kept. Can you do that with the rest of your daily activities outlined in the statistical table at the end of this article?

Lifetime Odds and Number of Deaths in 2003

TOTAL NUMBERS AND ODDS OF AN ACCIDENTAL DEATH IN THE USA BY CAUSE OF INJURY in 2003 – comparing human fatalities caused by captive exotic and wild animals (average up to year 2006) to deaths caused in the course of a normal daily routine in every day life in 2003.

REXANO only used fatalities numbers since all deaths are reported and there is only one degree of death. Injuries in all walks of life range from life threatening to simple Band-Aid fix and many go unreported. The average life expectancy of 77 years was used to calculate the lifetime odds.

Cause of death in 2003	Number of deaths per year	One-year odds	Lifetime odds
Captive non-human primate	0*	0	0
Captive bear	0.125**	1 in 2,416,000,000	1 in 32,000,000
Captive elephant	0.81**	378,000,000	5,000,000

Captive big/exotic cat	1**	302,000,000	4,000,000
Captive reptile	1.5***	201,000,000	2,700,000
Fireworks discharge	11	26,440,910	340,733
Contact with hot tap-water	26	11,186,539	144,156
Flood	26	11,186,539	144,156
Bitten or struck by dog	32	9,089,063	117,127
Earthquake and other earth movements	32	9,089,063	117,127
Struck by or against another person	39	7,457,692	96,104
Lightning	47	6,188,298	79,746
Contact with hornets, wasps and bees	66	4,406,818	56,789
Cataclysmic storm (****)	75	3,878,000	49,974
Animal rider or occupant of animal-drawn vehicle	101	2,879,703	37,110
Alcohol	373	779,759	10,048
Fall on and from ladder or scaffolding	417	697,482	8,988
Drowning and submersion while in or falling into swimming pool	515	564,757	7,278
Firearms discharge	730	398,425	5,134
Air and space transport accidents	742	391,981	5,051
Occupant of all-terrain or other off-road motor vehicle	906	321,026	4,137
Drowning and submersion while in or falling into natural water	1225	237,429	3,060
Fall on and from stairs and steps	1,588	183,155	2,360
Exposure to smoke, fire and flames	3,369	86,331	1,113
Motorcycle riding	3,676	79,121	1,020
Assault by firearm	11,920	24,400	314

Motor vehicle accidents	44,757	6,498	84
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Source: National Safety Council, National Center for Health Statistics, U.S. Census, animal attack news reports

*In 1997 in Atlanta, Georgia, one Yerkes primate researcher supposedly died of herpes B after she was splashed in the eye with bodily fluids from a rhesus macaque; this can NOT be classified as animal 'attack', just like a nurse or doctor being accidentally infected with a blood from an AIDS patients can not be called a murder.

** Based on 16 year average 1990-2006 numbers

*** Based on 11 year average 1995-2006 numbers

(****)Includes hurricanes, tornadoes, blizzards, dust storms and other cataclysmic storms.

Note: Exotic animal yearly and lifetime odds numbers were rounded due to their extremely large size for the ease of use and quoting purposes in the media and legislative sessions.