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Press Releases

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ANIMAL WELFARE CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST THE WILD ANIMAL ORPHANAGE IN TEXAS

RIVERDALE, Md., May 24, 1999--The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently charged licensed animal exhibitors Ron and Carol Asvestas, doing business as the Wild Animal Orphanage in San Antonio, Texas, with violations of the Animal Welfare Act.

"It is the role of our inspectors to examine individuals and organizations that are licensed by the USDA for any violations of the AWA," said W. Ron DeHaven, deputy administrator for animal care with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, a part of USDA's marketing and regulatory programs mission area. "In every case, the health and safety of the animals is our primary concern."

APHIS inspectors found that the Asvestases failed to:

- Properly ventilate a primary enclosure used to transport a tiger;
- Construct and maintain primary enclosures used to transport animals so as to provide sufficient space to allow each animal to make normal postural and social adjustments with adequate freedom of movement;
- Maintain programs of disease control and prevention, euthanasia, and adequate veterinary care under the supervision and assistance of a doctor of veterinary medicine.
- Provide veterinary care to animals in need of care;
- Maintain structurally sound housing facilities for animals in good repair so as to protect the animals from injury, to contain the animals, and to restrict the entrance of other animals;
- Store supplies of food and bedding so as to adequately protect them against deterioration, molding, or contamination by vermin;
- Make provisions for the removal and disposal of animal wastes so as to minimize vermin infestation, odors, and disease hazards;
- Maintain structurally sound housing facilities for nonhuman primates in good repair so as to protect the animals from injury, to contain the animals securely, and to restrict the entrance of other animals;
- Provide animals kept outdoors with adequate shelter from inclement weather; and
- Store supplies of food for nonhuman primates in a manner that protects them from spoilage, contamination, and vermin infestation.

APHIS inspectors conduct inspections of licensees to ensure compliance with the Act. Any violations that inspectors find can lead to civil penalties. The AWA requires that regulated individuals and businesses provide animals with care and treatment according to standards established by APHIS. The standards include requirements for recordkeeping, adequate housing, sanitation, food, water, transportation, exercise for dogs, veterinary care, and shelter. The law regulates the care of animals that are sold as pets at the wholesale level, transported in commerce, used for biomedical research, or used for exhibition purposes.

NOTE TO EDITORS: If you would like an interview concerning this or any other AWA related issue please contact Jim Rogers or Jamie Ambrosi at the numbers listed above.