

Dear US Animal Protection Members

Please find below an important message below regarding a wild animal sanctuary currently under investigation by the USDA and Texas Office of the Attorney General.

Thank You

Dawn

ALERT: As many of you know, US Animal Protection launched into an investigation regarding the care and treatment of the exotic wild animals living in San Antonio, Texas. The Animal Sanctuary of the United States (dba The Wild Animal Orphanage (WAO)) claims to have hundred of exotic wild animals on two properties (one regulated by the USDA and the other property is unregulated). The regulated property has approximately 123 animals and an animal care technician claims to have 450 animals at the unregulated property.

Several years ago, an animal lover rescued 100+ potbellied pigs from a dire situation. Here is an account of what transpired, as told by the rescuer:

“It took me 3 months to do that rescue and ran close to \$10,000. All the local TV channels and newspapers from three parishes covered the story over the entire time, and helped me get donations.

Out of the donated funds, I paid to have all the pigs blood tested and tagged, the neutering of the 40 to 45 males, paid for some of the feed and hay bills for the months the pigs were at the shelter (I bought hay, feed, vegetables, and fruit for them also during that time out of my own pocket), and paid for the transport of the pigs as well as other animals (wolves, foxes, a Capuchin monkey with his little security blanket, and I can't remember who else) from another abuse case in an adjoining parish's animal control shelter. Wild Animal Orphanage had agreed to take all of these animals. There was no funding for the animals from the other parish, but Carol and Ron Asvestas told me they would need \$4,500.00 up front to cover the cost of constructing a new barn for the pigs and to fence off the acreage the pigs would be living on. WAO was paid the \$4,500.00 as agreed.

Carol promised the pigs and I that the pigs would have several grassy acres with lots of shade trees to live out their lives in peace and quiet. I specifically requested, and was promised that the pigs would be able to remain together as the familiarity of their herd members was the only sense of security and safety the pigs had ever known in their short little lives. Several months after the pigs were in San Antonio, I sent \$500 of my personal funds to WAO and later sent 3 pieces of my jewelry for which Carol told me WAO got an additional \$1,500.00.

I was in contact with Carol Asvestas for years after the pigs arrived in San Antonio via phone and email. I repeatedly asked for photos of the pigs and was always promised pictures but never received. All I ever got was her pat answer, "They're fine!" I heard different rumors along the way about WAO and my pigs and other animals and every time I would ask Carol to give me proof with photos or a video of the pigs to quiet any rumors and to rest my own anxieties, Carol would always want names and would always threaten to sue me or anyone else saying anything derogatory about WAO. Carol wrote to me and told me that the "beautiful barn" had been completed. Again, I requested photos, but never given any. According to the news story, Carol now says the barn was built, but they later tore it down. She certainly never conveyed that to me.

Carol told me some months after the arrival of the pigs at WAO that she sent about half of them to a board member who lived near by. She said she kept the rest. She would never give me a name or address, but said the pigs were close by and she could and did check on them regularly and "they were fine!" Much later on, she said all the pigs were sent to two different board member's homes, but again, the pigs were nearby, as always, "They're fine!"

I was told at one point by one person that Carol said she "got rid of them" when asked how the pigs were doing, and later told by someone else that Ron had been seen loading all the pigs up on a truck not long after they arrived at WAO. I was told a few pigs could not be caught and they may still be there at WAO, but I have found no one to this day who has said they have seen them. I was told while the pigs were seen by workers at WAO being loaded onto a truck; no one at the sanctuary was ever told where Ron took the pigs to that day.

For almost 8 years now, this has haunted me. I can't begin to tell you the guilt I feel for letting those babies down if anything has happened to them. It has been torture not knowing their whereabouts or if they are even alive or dead. Other than to take in a few pigs and other animals myself, I can no longer bring myself to do rescue work if I can't personally take the animals.

TAKE ACTION: The circumstances surrounding the pigs disappearance is very disturbing as the US Animal Protection discovered a lot of animals went to the same property where the pigs were supposed to live and many of those animals have also disappeared. According to court records, Ms. Asvestas claimed the pigs went to "two ranches." And recently, when Ms. Asvestas was questioned by the San Antonio Lightning, she claimed she did not know where the animals went and would have to "check her records." Even though she could not remember where the animals went, she told the editor that the pigs were "in a good place." I've heard this quote before as adults tend to use this statement when explaining the death of an animal to a child – "don't worry, honey, he's gone to a good place." See San Antonio Lightning story here: <http://www.sanantoniolightning.com/francis.html> (scroll to the 90 Pig Mystery story)

The fate of the potbellied pigs is long overdue and it is time the WAO provides the public with a response to a very general question – where are the pigs? Now you may wonder, why US Animal Protection is interested in the fate of the potbellied pigs? What’s the big deal about the pigs? Simple – US Animal Protection supports and defends the smallest creatures that cannot speak out for them selves. US Animal Protection has reason to believe a horrible crime has been perpetrated against these little guys and it is time for the WAO to be held accountable for its actions. Please take a moment to send an e-mail to the WAO requesting the location and post current dated photos of the pigs on its website. It is time to put this issue to rest, once and for all. If the WAO has nothing to hide, then the WAO should be more than willing to post an updated story and photos on the pigs’ whereabouts and condition on its website. Here is a sample e-mail content, which may be copied and pasted into an e-mail to: wao@stic.net:

Dear Ms. Carol Asvestas:

I am very concerned about the 100+ potbellied pigs the Wild Animal Orphanage took in several years ago. Your organization agreed to provide the 100+ potbellied pigs a permanent home at your facility. It is now reported, the potbellied pigs are no longer living at the Wild Animal Orphanage and the circumstance regarding the location of the pigs is unclear.

Many people placed animals in your care, expecting the animals would receive life-long quality care at the WAO. It saddens me to learn the pigs were relocated after promises were made for quality life-long care was made to the public by way of media news coverage.

I, and many others, would like to know the fate of the 100+ potbellied pigs that used to reside at the WAO. Please provide an updated story and current **dated** photos of the pigs residing at their new home on your website. You claim to have about 10 potbellied pigs on your property – so where are the 90+ potbellied pigs? If you could also include pictures of your 10 pigs living in their new and improved home, it would go a long way of instituting good faith within the animal rescue community. Thank you.

Sincerely,

[insert your name]

Thank you so much for taking the time to send this e-mail to the WAO. Hopefully, if everyone takes a moment to contact this facility, we can achieve our desired outcome – accountability for the 100+ potbellied pigs. See attached photo of the pigs’ temporary “quality” home at the WAO. This photo was taken prior to the animals’ disappearance. This is why we do what we do – support and defend the animals in their time of crisis.



Potbellied pigs living in a "quality" enclosure - notice the lovely "pig barn" that cost the animal rescuer thousands of dollars...