



08 June 2023

Wellington Animal Hospital Group (WAHG)
E-mail: egbert@wahg.co.za

Exotic Animal World
E-mail: esther@yebo.co.za

Dear Dr. Compion,

Your Veterinary Report and reply to Final Warning #EAW/05/19 seen by us in hard copy at Exotic Animal World (EAW) Klapmuts on 05/06/2023 refers.

It is stated that your report/comments are to be read in conjunction with EAW's reply to the above, which to date we have not received at our offices in either the format of hard printed copy or digital transmission (email) so we may only respond to the points you chose to respond to within the format of your official Veterinary Report.

Please take note that our Warning includes concerns with regard to the Animals Protection Act 71 of 1962 and the Performing Animal Protection Act 24 of 1935. This was written in conjunction with a specialized veterinarian as well. The Final Warning was drafted by combining the acts and the veterinarian's findings as we conducted the inspection together.

Below are further queries with regard to your report and your findings that we would like for you to respond to as soon as possible. We would like to put this matter to bed and resolve the animal welfare concerns at the Exotic Animal World (EAW) soonest.

Kindly confirm if each animal mentioned in our warning was physically examined and if your clinical notes for each are available?

Below we list further queries in point form according to the numbering of the Warning and your report, for your response.

1a(i) Bonded but they are over preening each other (two separate species Eclectus and Black-capped Lori): If they are bonded as described, your opinion is that separating them is unadvised (no reason given). It is our consideration that their "bonding" should not be to the detriment of one animal where it is not the animal's fault (or desire as non-conspecific species) to be placed in close contact. Placing the animals together was the decision of the facility management with the result that one animal developed obsessive behaviour over the other. If one bird is busy denuding the other, that is a problem for the bird who is being plucked. They must be separated for the health of the plucked bird. We please ask that you elaborate on this point.

(ii), (iii) The Umbrella Cockatoo and African Grey Parrot: They were not addressed in your report. We please ask that you address this issue and provide us with feedback.

(iv) When last was Bibi, the Eclectus parrot, seen by CEAH? We require the veterinarian report of the bird's last visit.

(v) Mufasa, the ring-tailed Lemur It was confirmed to us by a primatologist that "ring-tailed Lemurs do not experience a colour change on their scrotum at all. They have black hair on their testicles that cannot change colour." It is their opinion that there must be a serious infection, wound, or chafing present to change the scrotum to a red colour (e.g. raw skin). Our insistence that this animal is seen by a specialist primate veterinarian holds.

1b(i) Obese marmoset: What is this animal's dietary regimen going forward and how is this being administered or controlled as he is kept in an enclosure with other marmosets?

(ii) Green iguana: We requested radiology of this animal to rule out underlying bone deformities and/or MBD. We need X-rays to be taken and submitted to us. The EAW staff mentioned to us that they are treating the snout wound with Silbecor cream which might only be a temporary solution to the problem.

1c(i) Blue-tonged skink: The ossified tail was described as an old injury. Our concern is for this animal's natural movement and further quality of life. An animal's long-term quality of life must be assured. We insist that this animal is examined and X-rayed with the x-rays submitted to us within 7 days. This is similar to Point 1(c)(i).

(ii) Carpet Python: Kindly elaborate on this point.

(iii) Green Iguana: You did suspect burns and old scarring. Kindly elaborate on the burns? Are they new? Is there an issue in the enclosure?

(iv) How was this python's respiratory system and /or possible presence of Dysecdysis checked? Kindly elaborate on this point.

1d(i) African Grey Parrot, (ii) Hybrid Macaw, (iii) Guinea Pigs (The attending staff member seemed uninformed about this. It was stated to us by the attending staff member that the female guinea pigs are all going to "be spayed soon", even though they are concerned that the majority of guinea pigs do not recover well from post-operative surgery).: these animals were not addressed in your report. We please ask that you address this issue and provide us with feedback.

(iv) Guinea pigs in need of treatment: can you elaborate on what treatment the three (3) guinea pigs require from the caretakers and don't they need to be separated to be monitored and not infect the others?

(v) Any comments on the issue raised here as Guinea pigs have very specific dietary needs?

1e(i) The Amazon parrot, (ii) Quaker parakeet : They were not addressed in your report. We please ask that you address this issue and provide us with feedback.

1g(i) Ticks on tortoises: This was not addressed in your report. We please ask that you address this issue and provide us with feedback. We also did observe tortoises with arrhythmic breathing in this enclosure.

1h(i)(ii)(iii) Spotted eagle owls: We require updated veterinarian reports for each of the four (4) owls addressed in our concerns. Were the birds individually and physically examined? It is debatable as to whether an owl with a broken wing / damaged eye can be construed to be "in good health" if it is limited by its handicap in the expression of natural behaviour. One owl (named 'Mocca') was seen to have good flight and to not be injured or habituated. Why is this bird being kept here if it can be released?

1i(i) African pygmy hedgehogs: Were all the park's hedgehogs examined as this is not included in your report? We please ask that you address this issue and provide us with feedback.

1j(i) Rosella parrot: Was the Rosella examined as it is not mentioned in the report? We please ask that you address this issue and provide us with feedback.

(ii) The pigeons and doves: They were not addressed in your report. We please ask that you address this issue and provide us with feedback.

Other concerns from number 2 to number 13 spoke of specific animal welfare concerns, not necessarily veterinarian concerns, but since you took the time to address these, it is our elaboration that:

2. Animals who cohabit “peacefully” may still impact one another negatively by allowing for one species’ environmental norms (e.g. food choices, bullying, predator/prey interactions, etc.) to be forced on the another species’ environmental norms (e.g. Guinea pigs vs. birds, Primates vs. birds, primates vs. Chinchillas, Chinchillas vs. birds, different temperate needs because of geographical origin.) This presents health and welfare concerns for all animals involved that is not compatible.

6. Your insistence that “Infra-Red (IR) lighting” was seen and deemed to be adequate around the facility is concerning since we were not able to locate a single IR light-emitting bulb in any of the enclosures. Aside from heating pads, the facility makes extensive use of heat-emitting red-tinted spot lamps which provide heat and a red light but which are in no way infra-red. Other than that they emit a red glow by their red-tinted lens. On the older bulbs observed, the red tint has burned off and thus is now just a spot lamp providing white light and heat, which can be disruptive to an animal’s (especially reptiles) natural/circadian biorhythms when left on at night (which the staff member asserted they are). We counted one ceramic heat bulb being used which was in the red-tailed boa’s enclosure. We please ask that you provide us with your response in this regard.

6 (cont.). We would argue that reptiles (including corn snakes) do not need supplemental heating in our climate, especially since we are in our winter season and the facility itself suffers from a lack of insulation against cold weather. It is our insistence that unless the room’s ambient temperature is above 26 degrees Celsius in winter, the reptile enclosures (regardless of species contained) need heat-emitting light or a heating pad not smaller than 15cm x 15cm located on one side of the enclosure with a suitable hide provided. Keeping reptiles artificially heated throughout the year in South Africa is considered normal good husbandry practice (regardless of from the species’ geographical origin), especially for animals that need to be on display to a paying public and that need to continue to eat throughout the winter months (heat is a requirement for good digestion and normal body temperature regulation), We please ask that you provide us with your response in this regard.

7. (a) There was no indication of old chicken wire / mesh being removed or replaced and it was explained to us by the staff member who was assisting our recent inspection that this particular refurbishment will be done “when there is money for it” but that currently there is no money as the facility claims they have spent all available funds on fixing the fire damage.

8. While your assertion that “...excellent ventilation is provided when weather permits...” it is our view that this does not account for all the times when weather does not permit supplemental ventilation (i.e. winter). We have not once seen the side partitions being opened on our visits and a strong odour is noticeable when entering the enclosed bays.

9b) Keeping and breeding Carpet python sp. in rack systems for trade should have no bearing on animals being put on permanent display to a public who wish to view the animal in as natural-type a setting as possible while allowing the animal to express natural behaviour. We

learned on our recent inspection that this enclosure is “temporary” although we have only ever viewed this particular individual habituating this unsuitable enclosure. It is our opinion that it is not sufficient to state merely that an animal’s enclosure is temporary while another one is being thought about, without actually having a plan for a future, more suitable habitat. It was also explained that the vivarium they were busy building for this individual was destroyed in the recent fire. Furthermore, it is our view that as all snake species can climb, a semi-arboreal/ arboreal species must be provided with a suitable log or branch for climbing. For this carpet python we insist that this climbing enrichment is at least 900mm in height, preferably anchored to the enclosure sides by screws but not touching the enclosure floor, for easier cleaning.

11) This is not fair towards the public that are put in danger to the Iguana; and the Iguana that might be stressed unnecessarily as it is exposed to all external elements, other species and humans.

We would consider it incorrect to assert that captivity is providing a “haven” for injured or confiscated wildlife, especially when those animals’ total necessities are not being catered for. We would assert that it is incorrect to view the EAW as “one of the few remaining facilities to offer the service”, when they are charging people an entrance fee to view animals and are therefore considered to be operating as a business who, it can be argued, are making money from the misfortune of wildlife and domestic animals. They are in tourism, not conservation and one must not blur the boundaries between the two.

Having “dedicated staff” who love animals is not the same thing as having knowledgeable and trained / educated staff who know what they are doing with the animals they must care for. Mr. James Lawrence (Education Officer/Manager) was the prime example of this when we visited the facility and he was the ONLY staff member available to assist us but could not answer most of our questions regarding the husbandry of the animals. It is assumed that the staff who are employed at this facility full-time are paid a salary and were each hired for their knowledge or specialised training, not for their base love of animals. The majority of the staff members at this facility that we have spoken to during our inspections have expressed an alarming lack of knowledge as to the needs of the majority of the animals under their care, and this is concerning to us.

It is acknowledged that the facility takes in animals that have suffered “years of neglect, abuse, inappropriate care or nutrition”, from which “some will never recover.” We would consider it is inhumane to continue to subject these same animals to further years of neglect, inappropriate care and nutrition at this facility.

To explain that “visitor education” is the facility’s biggest challenge is to recognise the fact that visitors are, in our opinion, offered a very poor educational experience at EAW, especially when the attitude of the management is to litter the enclosures, walls and cage fronts with internet-derived memes, comic strips and jokes about animals that offer no educational insight at all. We have found that enclosure signage to tell visitors what animal they are viewing is most often old, incorrect or missing altogether, distracting from the very real task of informing or educating their paying public.

It is our view that these animals cannot be viewed as being “the ambassadors of their species” when they are presented as injured, maimed, sick or otherwise distressed; they are the very antithesis of ambassadorial example.

This facility is not a case of "room for improvement" when there is *only* improvement that is desperately and urgently required and the only "important task" the management now has, is to comply with our recommendations.

We have copied the facility in this response for their records purposes.

Please do not hesitate to contact the writer for further information or clarification.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jaco Pieterse', written over a circular stamp or seal.

Jaco Pieterse
Chief Inspector
Manager:- Inspectorate & Wildlife Departments