

CAPE OF GOOD HOPE SPCA

VREDENHEIM BIG CATS PARK AND ANIMAL FARM at Vredenheim Wine Farm

Date: Wednesday, 26 August 2026

Time: 13h40 to 15h45

Contact: Coenraad Bezuidenhout (owner)
082 412 5039
agri@vredenheim.co.za
Jonathan Ontong (Head Guide)
082 887 7549

Address: R310 Baden Powell Dr, Stellenbosch, Cape Town, 7600 (GPS Coordinates: -33.961453, 18.808157)

Area: Stellenbosch, Western Cape

Inspectors: Elani Steenkamp and Rowan Davids

Report by: Elani Steenkamp

Background:

On Sunday, 01 June 2025, the Cape of Good Hope SPCA received the below email complaint:

From: Laaiqah Knowlden laaiqahk06@gmail.com
Sent: 24 August 2026 21:07
To: hcuadmin@spca-ct.co.za ; info@capespca.co.za
Cc: sanctuaryadmin@ad-international.org
Subject: Concern for animals living condition at Vredenheim Big Cats Park, Stellenbosch

To Whom it may concern,

I would appreciate it if I can remain anonymous PLEASE please please

I do understand your hands are full, but this has been bothering me since I stepped out of the park over the weekend. Contemplating if im over thinking and unnecessary to send this email, however, after reading about the case of all the cattle dying from cold, my heart dropped again.

Too many things were alarming for me, and would be greatly appreciated if a check can be conducted.

1. Tigers enclosure small for 2 huge females. At 1st I thought they seemed distressed for pacing up and down, but it was minutes away from feeding time.
2. Black leopard seemed okay
3. 7 month old lion, tip of tail is hairless. Dirty, muddy and small enclosure. Very lonely too.

I could go through all the big cats but it would be better to check for yourself.
Main concern...

1. No fresh drinking water in site. Unless it's kept at the other end.

2. No proper shelter from rain
3. Cats look sad and restless. Retired leopard that suffers with arthritis des not even have dry, warm shelter .
4. Im assuming they live off whole chickens only as they get fed twice a day, everyday.
5. At the farm animal side, none of the animals had proper shelter and never saw clean drinking water.
6. Hay is wet and grounds are muddy.
7. X3 baby lambs shivering on the ground with a mom thats huge, sharing a tiny chicken coop.

There was an incident where farmers jack Russell got in to the farm animal areas, and attacked a duck. No staff member was in site. A visitor had to get help from the ticket office. The duck was badly injured, eventually when a staff member came, they were more concerned of the dog sprinting off with a piece of wing towards the big cats side. Eventually after a while they came to attend to the bird. All they said was, they will see if it recover on its own... while the blood is running.

Please check it out. None of the animals look happy .

Ps: I've typed this email on the 10th, but it wouldnt go though with the pictures. Stayed queuing. I do have pictures but to many to attach on email. I still cant stop thinking about the animals with this cold weather and its 3 weeks later

Findings:

Access granted by: Michaela and Jonathan Ontong

Animals Seen:

Animals:	Sex:	Names:	Age in years:	Concerns:
Bengal Tigers (white)	2 females	Kira & Fahari	7 years	Appeared to display anticipatory behaviour when enclosure approached due to feeding. No drinking water due to burst pipe being fixed.
Melanistic Black Cape Leopard	1 male	Rosco	11 years	Did not pace, just lay on platform.
African Leopard	1 male	CJ	17 years	Did not pace, just lay in its hole.
Lions (white)	1 male	Kalahari	7 months	Very playful and intuitive. Water pump was turned on when observing Kalahari. No issue with tail, hairs are still short on tip of tail.
Lions (white)	1 female	Luna	6 years	Did not pace, just lay on platform.
Lions (tawny)	1 male, 1 female	Thabo & Thandi	13 years	Did not pace, just lay on platform.
Bengal Tiger (normal)	1 male	Titan	13 years	Came towards us after swimming in pond. No pacing.
Pony	1 male	Prince	Adult	No obvious concerns noted.
Leopard Tortoises	1 male, 1 female	Unknown	Adult	No obvious concerns noted.
Merino Sheep	1 female and 1 lamb	Unknown	Adult & juvenile	No obvious concerns noted.
Alpaca	1 male, 1 female	Unknown	Adult	No obvious concerns noted.

Rabbits	2 males	Unknown	Adult	No obvious concerns noted.
Muscovy ducks	2 Mixed	Unknown	Adult	No obvious concerns noted.
Lohmann Brown Chicken	18 Mixed	Unknown	Adult	No obvious concerns noted.
Duck	2 Mixed	Unknown	Adult	No obvious concerns noted.
Peacock	1 male, 3 females	Unknown	Adult	No obvious concerns noted.
Turkey	15 Mixed	Unknown	Adult	No obvious concerns noted.
Goats	5 Mixed	Unknown	Adult	No obvious concerns noted.
Springbok	Appr. 100 mixed	Unknown		Not observed. In open field on other part of property.
Potbelly Pigs	2 mixed	Unknown	Adult	No obvious concerns noted.
Eland	Appr. 10 mixed	Unknown	Adult	Not observed. In open field on other part of property.
Asian Water Buffalo	1 unknown	Unknown	Adult	Not observed. In open field on other part of property.
Sable	1 unknown	Unknown	Adult	Not observed. In open field on other part of property.
Zebra	2 unknown	Unknown	Adult	Not observed. In open field on other part of property.
Fallow Deer	Appr. 30 unknown	Unknown	Adult	Not observed. In open field on other part of property.
Emu	2 unknown	Unknown	Adult	Not observed. In open field on other part of property.

Shearer: Alpaca Loom

Veterinarian and Dentist: De La Rey Brugman (Stellenbosch Animals Clinic) – 084 585 8464

Farrier: Forged Hoof or themselves

Cape Nature Permit: CN7-54-36447; Expiry date: 31/03/2027

PAPA License: PAL/08/801/126; Expiry date: 23/10/2027

Findings

On Wednesday, 26 August 2026, Inspector Rowan Davids and I conducted an inspection to investigate the complaint.

We first went to the Petting Farm assisted by Micaela. The animals include the pony, goats, pigs, sheep, poultry, alpacas, rabbits and leopard tortoises. All animals kept here had access to clean living conditions, shelter, roughage, food and water. Most animals were kept separately except for the leopard tortoises and rabbits on display. The ducks had access to ponds to swim in. They clean the pond water every two to three days depending on how quickly it gets dirty. No injured duck was observed.

The only concern found here was there was a dirty bucket of water observed in the poultry enclosure but they rectified this immediately.

After this, we went to the feed room. They have separate rooms for the Petting Farm animals' food and the Big Cat Park food. The Petting farm food room was neat. Each bag of food was marked and there was a feeding schedule on the wall indicating the time and what needs to be fed to each animal daily. They also have a signed register on the daily checks for the animals.

The cat Park feed room consisted of 6 deep freezers of which two had condemned meat that needs to be disposed of, 3 were functional with fresh food and 1 deep freeze was not working and in need of repair. We checked each freezer. They mainly feed the felines 2 – 3 whole chickens a day. Once every two weeks they will get red meat that is hunted

on the owner's personal farm which is either springbok or fallow deer. All necessary procedures were on the wall. The cats in need of arthritis medication, like the African leopard are being treated for this. They place the medication inside the chickens. They also give them "Predator" vitamin supplements in their food regularly. When necessary, they treat the felines for tick, fleas and worms. The veterinarian visits the farms at least twice a year or when necessary.

The chickens are obtained from Rainbow Chicken in Worcester. Vredenheim staff collects the chicken stock every second week and cervically dislocate it at Rainbow Chicken before taking it to Vredenheim Wine Farm.

Before conducting the Cat Park inspection assisted by Micaela and Ontong, we confirmed that the acceptable minimum size for the enclosure of a feline above 50kg is 400 m² per cat according to the Nature Conservation Regulations 955 of 1975.

Sizes of the feline enclosures:

- Kira and Fahari: 1699.39m²
- Rosco: 1529.39 m²
- CJ: 700.53 m²
- Kalahari and Luna: 2446.11 m²
- Thabo and Thandi: 2621.47 m²
- Titan: 2727.51 m²

The sizes of the enclosures were legally acceptable. At the time of our inspection Head guide Ontong mentioned that a water pipe burst the morning at around 4h00. During our visit, they were fixing the water pipes. All animals have automatic water troughs. This was not working until we inspected the cat park. In the meantime, they manually filled buckets of water and placed this in the animal enclosures.

All felines had access to shelter, water, space and had environmental enrichment in the form of either balls, tyres or hessian bags. No veterinary concerns were observed. I did notice a small growth on the Rosco's forehead. When asked Ontong mentioned that a tick had previously bitten him there and that is how the scar healed.

The tigers had access to dams or running water inside their enclosures. The pond in Titan's enclosure gets cleaned every 2 to 3 days. Kira and Fahari has a running stream throughout their enclosure. All enclosures are electrified and has an isolation camp for cleaning or veterinary purposes.

Kira and Fahari were pacing as they were waiting to be fed at 15h00.

Kalahari is a 7-month-old white lion that is still growing its tail hair. He was in good condition. When asked where they obtained him from, the only answer I could get was that they bought him from a farm in the North West Province. During the tour I noticed the guide explaining to the public that they got him at 2 months old and hand-reared him until he was older. It does seem like they are buying the animals in from across the country. I asked whether they have rescues, but they denied this.

We stayed until feeding time at 15h00 to observe the movement of the cats when they are fed, but no concerns were observed.

After the feeding time, we went to observe the management plan and permits in their possession. This was up to date.

Conclusion:

No contraventions of the Animals Protection Act 71 of 1962 were observed during our inspection of the facility. I will follow-up with Cape Nature and the State Vet with regards to the animals listed as there are many that is not on the permits according to my knowledge. This includes the animals that are part of the game drive such as the zebras and emus.

A routine inspection must be conducted when the Facilities Inspectors is next in the area.

[End]