

# Wild Wilderness Drive-Through Safari

20923 Safari Rd., Gentry, AR 72734

**Wild Wilderness Drive-Through Safari (aka “Wild Wilderness, Inc.”) is owned by the Wilmoth family and has failed to meet minimum federal standards for the care of animals used in exhibition as established in the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has cited Wild Wilderness repeatedly for failing to provide veterinary care, failing to provide shelter from inclement weather, failing to provide clean drinking water, and failing to clean enclosures properly. In 2014, a spider monkey lost tips of his fingers and a number of baboons lost the tips of their tails—a facility representative stated that the animals had suffered from frostbite. The facility had been cited numerous times throughout the years for failing to provide primates with adequate shelter. In 2004, two visitors to the drive-through park exited their vehicle to pet a tiger through a cage, and one of them was bitten on her middle finger, stripping the flesh. The previous month, a person who was paid to feed the animals was attacked by a chimpanzee and lost two fingers. In 2002, Ross Wilmoth paid \$10,000 to the USDA to settle AWA violations, and earlier that year, Freddy Wilmoth pleaded guilty to transporting four adult tigers after selling the big cats to a facility in Missouri where they were shot in a trailer. The new owners intended to sell the hides, which could be worth up to \$20,000 each. Ross Wilmoth also settled with the USDA for \$8,000 in 1999, for \$4,000 in 1998, and for \$300 in 1992.**

**April 8, 2015:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to handle lion cubs properly. On October 22, 2014, a park visitor sought medical attention for an injury received while participating in a park-allowed interaction with an uncontrolled 12-week-old lion cub.

**February 15, 2015:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to dispose of expired medications and failing to provide the ring-tailed lemurs with adequate enclosures. At least two of the animals were observed outside the enclosure.

**October 22, 2014:** According to an Arkansas Incident Report filed by the Benton County Sheriff’s Office, a person was bitten by a 14-week-old African lion cub at Wild Wilderness.

**May 29, 2014:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for

failing to have sufficient barriers throughout the facility, failing to provide environmental enhancement to promote the psychological well-being of two adult chimpanzees as well as a lone 5-month-old capuchin monkey who was being housed in the barn that’s normally used to house giraffes, and failing to provide several Aoudad sheep and a goat, who all had overgrown hooves, with adequate veterinary care.

**January 27, 2014:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide animals with adequate veterinary care. A spider monkey had lost tissue on the digits of his back feet, and bone appeared to be exposed on a couple of toes. A veterinarian had provided a treatment plan, along with antibiotics and a painkiller, earlier that month, although there were no records that the licensee had observed the condition of the monkey since the vet’s last visit eight days earlier. And the condition of the digits continued to deteriorate. A Hamadryas baboon had a lesion on his scrotum. A western baboon had a lesion on his middle finger. An adult rhesus macaque was not moving his arm and kept it tucked close to his body. Many other animals also had medical problems.

Wild Wilderness was again cited for failing to provide 12 baboons and nine macaques with sufficient shelter to protect them from the cold. The inspector noted that several animals were crouched down and huddled together and that many were currently under treatment for previously noted injuries (see January 8, 2014). The facility was also cited for not providing safe flooring in the enclosure housing the red foxes. The floor was made out of chain-link fencing, and the only safe places to walk were on sleeping mats and ramps used to get to the second level.

**January 8, 2014:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide animals with adequate veterinary care. A spider monkey was missing the tips of most of his fingers, the skin was red and swollen around the remainder of the fingers, and bone appeared to be exposed on one remaining digit. The last 4 inches of an olive baboon’s tail was bent at an abnormal angle. The inspector noted that he had left the room and returned to find the baboon chewing at the bent area. Then the end of the tail fell to the ground. The area where it had been attached was red and had a reddish discharge, and the part that fell off “looked like a piece of dried meat.” At least three other female adult olive baboons had injuries to the tips of their tails, an adult olive baboon had a shortened tail, and at least 10 more baboons had shortened tails without open lesions. When this was noted to a facility representative, he stated that the animals had suffered from frostbite and that he had not observed the injuries. Finally, a capuchin monkey had a thumb injury, and an antelope was lame.

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Wild Wilderness was also cited for failing to provide sufficient housing. Three baboons were being housed outdoors in an unheated metal 2-foot-by-3-foot enclosure that stood 4 feet tall. Three Bornean bearded pigs didn't have shelter, two bobcats had a shelter made of wire fencing and black plastic, and at least two lemurs were outside an enclosure chewing on a live electrical wire.

The facility was also cited for failing to provide a clean area to store food, failing to provide food free from contamination, failing to provide clean water in at least six enclosures, and failing to maintain clean enclosures. At least eight enclosures had an excessive accumulation of waste on the floor.

**March 7, 2013:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide a capuchin monkey, who had a mass on her neck and areas of hair loss, with adequate veterinary care. It was also cited for failing to handle a 7-month-old lion properly. The animal was found dead in an enclosure after being left alone with a collar on. The facility representative said that it looked like the lion had been strangled by the collar. It was also cited for failing to provide sufficient public barriers at the enclosures for hippos and rhinos. Several areas allowed for vehicles to drive next to the fence. It was also cited for failing to have a sufficient number of attendants present, failing to avoid contamination in food and bedding supplies, and failing to provide the primates with adequate environmental enrichment.

**January 23, 2012:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide animals with safe, clean, and sufficient housing. One enclosure housing three primates contained a dirty shelter with a floor that had excessive accumulation of grime, dirt, and waste material. The concrete drainage pad adjacent to the outdoor portion of the enclosures housing primates in the winter had an excessive accumulation of waste material. The enclosure for servals had rotted resting boards, leaving broken areas and jagged points. The resting boards in the enclosure for foxes were worn, leaving jagged edges and the exposed top of a nail. The shelter in the enclosure for bears had loose torn sheet metal, exposing sharp metal edges. Five enclosures had an excessive accumulation of waste, and four enclosures contained dirty water receptacles. A rhesus macaque was running free in the drive-through area. The licensee said that three primates were loose at that time.

**November 2, 2010:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide two Arctic foxes with adequate veterinary care. One had a "lesion on the dorsal aspect of the tail" that had a slight discharge, and the other was reluctant to stand upright while walking and appeared unstable while walking. It was also cited for

failing to provide primates with clean enclosures. The interior walls, floors, and perches of two enclosures had dirt and grime on the surfaces, and there were spiders and cobwebs on the interior walls and ceiling as well as dirt and grime on the exterior walls. Finally, it was cited for failing to store food properly. The barrels used to store food didn't have tight-fitting lids.

**September 1, 2010:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide a juvenile black bear, who was lame on the right front limb and had lesions on both front paws, with adequate veterinary care. It was also cited for failing to provide sufficient barriers in four areas of the drive-through portion: the enclosure for buffalo and small hippos, the enclosure for rhinos, the enclosure for large hippos, and the enclosure for cloudy leopards. It was cited for failing to provide clean, sufficient, safe housing in two enclosures housing primates. The top portions of three shelters were torn and ragged, and the bottom sections were torn and had lost structural stability. It was cited for failing to store and provide food free from contamination. An excessive number of flies were in six enclosures that had food scraps on the floor contaminated with dirt and flies. Food in the food-storage areas wasn't properly protected, and food requiring refrigeration wasn't stored appropriately. Mold was seen on bread in at least three boxes containing bread products, and there were bird droppings, rodent feces, and loose feed on the platform used to store biscuits for the monkeys. At least 20 barrels containing fruit and vegetables weren't refrigerated and didn't have tight-fitting lids.

**September 3, 2009:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide sufficient barriers in two locations of the drive-through area to prevent vehicles from driving next to the enclosures and one in the walk-through area. The enclosure housing zebras had no barrier to prevent public contact. The facility was also cited for failing to have sufficient, safe housing in an enclosure for primates. It contained a doghouse shelter that had an opening on the bottom portion that was broken and ragged. The facility was cited for failing to provide food free from contamination, as several enclosures contained raw meat that had been placed on the ground.

**June 11, 2008:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide safe, clean, sufficient housing in six enclosures for primates. They didn't contain adequate shelters—the shelters weren't large enough either for animals to make normal postural adjustments or to accommodate all animals in the enclosure. The enclosure housing three Arctic foxes had an excessive accumulation of feces, and most of the floor had a mixture of feces and mud packed solid. At least four enclosures had dirty shelters. It was also cited for failing to provide clean water. At least four

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enclosures had dirty receptacles, two of which had a green discoloration on the inside.

**February 12, 2008:** The USDA issued repeat citations to Wild Wilderness for failing to provide clean drinking water. Three receptacles had rust on the inside and held dirty water. It was also cited for failing to provide two juvenile lions with adequate shelter. The shelters weren't tall enough for the lions to stand nor large enough for the cats to turn around. At the time of the inspection, it was 26 degrees and the inspector also noted that bedding must be provided.

**September 7, 2007:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide a male wolf, who had lesions on the tips of both ears along with hair loss and red skin on both ears, with adequate veterinary care. It was cited for failing to provide enclosures with sufficient barriers. The enclosure housing big cats didn't have a barrier to prevent cars from driving next to it on one side, and the enclosure housing zebras in the walk-through area didn't have a sufficient barrier. It was cited for failing to provide safe, sufficient, and clean housing in at least eight enclosures. Some shelters weren't tall enough for the animals to sit or stand in, and other enclosures lacked a sufficient number of shelters for the animals they housed. The enclosure housing black bears wasn't sufficient to contain the bear cub, whom the exhibitor admitted had climbed up and over the fencing. Four enclosures housing cougars or leopards didn't have shelters that allowed the animals to stand. Two enclosures housing one dog each didn't have any shelter. The enclosure with two bobcats didn't have an enclosure big enough for both animals. The shelters in the two wolf enclosures either were too short or didn't have a wind/rain break. And the shelter in an enclosure for capuchin monkeys had an excessive accumulation of feces and mud on the floor—most of the floor area was covered with feces. It was also cited for failing to provide clean water. There were multiple dirty water receptacles, and at least four had a green discoloration on the surface. Finally, it was cited for failing to keep the feed receptacle in the enclosure for bobcats clean. It contained a liquid and solid mixture with numerous fly larvae and emitted an unpleasant odor.

**May 4, 2007:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide a bobcat, who was circling when walking and bumping into support posts, with adequate veterinary care. It was cited for failing to provide primates with safe, clean, sufficient enclosures inside the indoor housing facility. They hadn't been constructed to be readily cleaned and sanitized. At the time of the inspection, the walls, floor, ceiling, hanging tires, and perches were covered with dirt and grime. The housing that held the primates during the winter had inadequate lighting.

One enclosure housing a spotted and a black leopard didn't have adequate housing—the only shelter was two blue barrels with one end of each completely open, and the interiors of both were wet. It was cited for failing to provide food free from contamination. Several enclosures in the drive-through portions had chicken pieces on the ground, which the licensee said was leftover meat from the previous evening. "Cartilage pieces" were on the ground and contaminated with dirt. It was also cited for failing to provide clean water in at least five enclosures. They contained water receptacles that had a green discoloration on the surface. Two containers had rust, and cloudy water was in one receptacle in the indoor facility housing primates. When asked how water receptacles were cleaned in that building, the licensee said that "the employees used a hose and overfilled with enough water to clean out the receptacles." Wild Wilderness was also cited for failing to provide the primates with adequate environmental enhancement to promote their psychological well-being.

**October 24, 2006:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide animals with adequate shelter. The rhesus macaques were housed outdoors in the drive-through area, and the shelter didn't have a heat source. The baboons were kept in five enclosures containing blue plastic barrels for housing, which didn't have heat sources. The kangaroos' shelters were metal barns with one open side on each. The big cats were given blue barrels for shelter with one end completely open, and they weren't large enough for the animals to turn around in.

**February 8, 2005:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide adequate lighting inside the indoor housing facility for primates and not providing primates with a diurnal cycle, as artificial lights were left on 24 hours a day. It was also cited for failing to provide the rhesus macaques, who were housed outdoors in the drive-through area, with adequate shelter. They had two unheated blue barrels without bedding and an unheated wooden structure with bedding that wasn't large enough to house all the animals. The inspector noted that overnight temperatures were below 35 degrees. The facility was also cited because the floor of the enclosure holding the rhesus macaques was wet and muddy. It was cited for failing to provide five primates being housed individually with environmental enhancement to promote their psychological well-being. Wild Wilderness received a repeat citation for failing to provide the rhesus macaques with a sufficient enclosure, as three were running free in the drive-through area.

**November 23, 2004:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide bears with sufficient shelter. The enclosure contained four bears but had

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shelter for only two of them. The facility was issued repeat citations for failing to provide the rhesus macaques with a sufficient enclosure, as several were running free in the drive-through area, and for failing to have sufficient barriers to keep the public at a distance from the animals.

**November 6, 2004:** Two visitors to Wild Wilderness stopped their vehicle at the tiger cages and climbed out of the car to pet a tiger through a cage. The tiger bit the middle finger of one of the visitors, stripping the flesh from her finger.

**October 9, 2004:** A woman being paid to feed animals at Wild Wilderness had her arm pulled into a chimpanzee enclosure, and the chimpanzee "bit off much of her hand, including two fingers." She filed a lawsuit against the park, and the case was later settled for an undisclosed amount.

**April 6, 2004:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to have sufficient public barriers around an enclosure with two large black bears and around the enclosure for the Arctic foxes, failing to remove bird nests from enclosures and to have an effective program to control them, and failing to have sufficient, safe shelter for two black bears whose shelter was rusted and falling apart. It was also issued repeat citations for failing to provide the rhesus macaques with a sufficient enclosure, as several were running free in the drive-through area, and for failing to provide fresh water, as several water receptacles had a green discoloration.

**April 11, 2003:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness again for failing to provide the rhesus macaques with a sufficient enclosure, as several were running free in the drive-through area. It was also cited for failing to provide safe and sufficient housing. The enclosure for bobcats had a rusted vertical support pole, and a wooden den box was unstable and in disrepair. The enclosure housing the rhinoceros had displaced sheet metal on the door of the barn, exposing sharp edges. The compound for lions and tigers had a gap under the enclosure fence, and the perimeter fence in the back portion of the park had a large gap between the ground and the fence. It was also cited for failing to remove old food from the enclosure for Arctic foxes, which appeared to have chicken meat on the ground, some of which didn't look fresh. Finally, it was cited for failing to provide fresh water, as several water receptacles had a green discoloration.

**January 14, 2003:** The USDA issued repeat citations to Wild Wilderness for failing to have sufficient barriers to keep the public at a distance from the animals and failing to provide safe and sufficient enclosures. Several rhesus macaques were running free in the drive-through area, the enclosure for tigers

had sharp edges from a torn tin roof, and the chain-link fence was loose in two places in the enclosure for the spotted leopards.

**June 20, 2002:** Ross Wilmoth agreed to pay \$10,000 to the USDA to settle charges of AWA violations, including providing animals with inadequate care, having inadequate barriers, having cages in disrepair, and having cages that were too small.

**June 5, 2002:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to have a complete program of veterinary care. The facility was also issued repeat citations for failing to have sufficient barriers to keep the public at a distance from the animals and failing to provide safe and sufficient housing. The enclosures for leopards and zebras had wire extending into the cages, the enclosure for leopards also had rusted support poles, several rhesus macaques were running free in the drive-through area, the enclosure for cougars had a broken support pole, a shelter box in the enclosure for wolves had a 6-inch hole, the enclosures for Arctic foxes and caviars contained ragged and splintered wood ramps, the enclosure for black bears had sharp edges from a torn tin roof, and no housing was provided in an enclosure housing a zebra. Wild Wilderness was also cited for having insulation from the wall on the floor of the inside of the shelter for giraffes and in the winter quarters for the primates and for allowing bird droppings to cover the floor of the enclosure for Asian porcupines.

**February 25, 2002:** According to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, following a U.S. Fish & Wildlife investigation Wild Wilderness operator Freddy Wilmoth pleaded guilty to the illegal transport of four adult tigers after selling the big cats to a facility in Missouri where they were shot inside a trailer. The new owners had intended to sell the hides, which could be worth up to \$20,000 each.

**January 22, 2002:** Two workers at Wild Wilderness were attacked by cougars as they were trying to transfer them to a larger cage. One worker sustained multiple bites to an arm and a leg and was airlifted to a hospital. The other worker was bitten in the face and transported to the local hospital.

**October 30, 2001:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide a public barrier around the enclosure for lion cubs. It was cited for tying a young monkey to a cage. Pens in the drive-through area had no supervision to stop the public from having direct contact with the animals. It was cited for failing to provide shelter from the elements, as primates were being housed outdoors without heat and temperatures were falling below 45 degrees. It was also cited for failing to provide safe enclosures. The enclosure for the mandrills had a tin roof with sharp points and

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edges, the barn for rhinos had worn tin and sharp edges on the front, and primates were loose and on the roads of the drive-through area. It was cited for failing to provide the primates with environmental enhancements to promote their psychological well-being. It was cited for failing to provide adequate housing. The den for the sun bears wasn't large enough for the animals to turn and lie in a normal manner nor was it constructed to keep them warm and dry. The black bears needed a den to keep them dry and warm, and a camel didn't have a shelter large enough to escape inclement weather. Finally, it was cited for failing to keep the barn for hippos and rhinos clear of mud, old hay, and fecal matter.

**November 2, 2000:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide a barrier between the public and the primary enclosure holding lemurs. Members of the public were observed entering one enclosure without an attendant supervising. It was also cited for failing to provide adequate primary enclosures. During the inspection, a ruffed lemur was loose with the public after she was let out of the enclosure by a member of the public. It was cited for failing to maintain a sanitary environment. Excreta covered the wooden resting surfaces of the enclosure for bat-eared foxes. Finally, it was cited for having unsafe enclosures for the black jaguars, lion, and tiger.

**March 29, 2000:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to store food properly. The bed of a pickup truck was filled with uncovered bread. Moldy bread was mixed with bread that wasn't. One of the food-storage buildings contained open bags of dog food and treats, and there were spilled seeds and other food on the floor and fecal matter in one corner. Wild Wilderness was also cited for having an enclosure for a chimpanzee that was of insufficient height and again for failing to address the social needs of a chimpanzee who was housed alone as well as a white-handed gibbon.

**May 6, 1999:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide animals with adequate vet care. A kangaroo in the petting zoo area had a bloody, clotted discharge coming from one nostril and appeared tired, and a male baboon was displaying lameness in a rear leg. The facility was also cited for failing to correct several noncompliant items found during the May 5, 1998, inspection.

**January 27, 1999:** A USDA news release announced that Wild Wilderness had agreed to a consent decision and order regarding past violations of the AWA and agreed to pay a civil penalty of \$8,000 and to hire an additional employee as well as correcting deficiencies in its acquisition records.

**September 15, 1998:** Ross Wilmoth paid \$4,000 to

the USDA to settle citations, including for having inadequate shelter, piles of animal waste, an ineffective pest-control program, and dirty bowls, food, and cages.

**August 11, 1998:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to supply suitable housing for the foxes, fennec fox, and porcupine, who had mesh flooring with openings that were too large for animals to walk safely across. It was also cited for failing to correct two noncompliant items that had been listed during a previous inspection.

**May 5, 1998:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide animals with safe housing. Five brown lemurs had a corroded sharp metal pipe in their enclosure, a fox had corroded metal pipes with sharp edges in his enclosure, a fox who was outside an enclosure was trying to find a way back in, and worn and damaged shelters needed to be removed from several enclosures. It was also cited for failing to have an environmental enhancement plan to address the social needs of primates. It was cited for failing to provide a sun bear with clean water—the water was green. It was cited for failing to provide a giraffe, who had extremely overgrown, deformed hooves on the front and hind feet, with adequate veterinary care. It was cited for improper handling. The inspector noted that two children prodded or lightly kicked a bear cub, and a young child tried to pick up a wolf puppy who was too large for him to do so safely. Finally, it was cited again for failing to have accurate records of inventory (see July 16, 1996).

**July 16, 1996:** The USDA cited Wild Wilderness for failing to provide camels with protection against inclement weather. It was also cited for failing to have barriers for some animals in the petting zoo who had been left unattended. It was cited for failing to provide several animals with clean water. Their water receptacles were coated with algae and contained floating debris. It was cited for failing to provide three young tigers with an appropriate enclosure. They had 6-foot fencing and no roof. Finally, it was cited for failing to have accurate records of inventory.

**1992:** Ross Wilmoth, owner of Wild Wilderness, agreed to pay the USDA \$300 to settle allegations of using improper cages.

**1988:** The USDA issued a warning to Ross Wilmoth for selling a cougar cub who had ringworm.