



# State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES  
FISH AND WILDLIFE

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David Golden, Assistant Commissioner

September 28, 2023

Dennis Ferreira  
SeaQuest Woodbridge  
250 Woodbridge Center Dr.  
Woodbridge, NJ 07095

Mr. Ferreira,

Thank you for taking the time on September 19, 2023 to take Conservation Police Officer Nicole Carman and me around SeaQuest Woodbridge to conduct a routine inspection of your exotic and nongame animals for your Animal Exhibitor and Endangered Species permits. The secondary purpose of this inspection was to follow up on the inspection conducted last year on August 23, 2022, and the corrective actions outlined in the letter dated October 26, 2022.

I was pleased to learn of your diligence in ensuring that the public areas are kept clean and free of food and debris. I appreciate that a high-powered vacuum and a silicone food-based lubricant is used to maintain the food machines and keep pests out of them. These machines are even sanded and repainted once a week. Your dedication to maintaining these food machines is impressive. At the time of our visit, there was no food left out, the public walkways were free of any debris, and there appeared to be no cockroaches visible at the time of inspection. I strongly recommend that you continue to utilize pest control methods to ensure that further pest infestations do not occur at your facility.

The doors to the back rooms were fitted with new locks. While it did take you approximately a month to have locks installed on these doors, I was pleased to see that they were finally in working order. Keeping employee-only area doors locked at all times will prevent the public from gaining access to the animals. This will help ensure that the animals are protected from the public and the public are protected from the animals.

Per the letter dated October 26, 2022, you were requested to “provide constant access to fresh food and water throughout the day for all animals.” The two-toed sloth’s waterfall was very slow and had a small amount of water trickling down. CPO Carman and I had to bring this to your attention twice before anything was done about it. It wasn’t until the very end of our visit when we asked again that your husbandry staff finally put a bird bath full of water inside the enclosure close to the sloth. The blue tongued skink also did not have an adequate amount of water in his dish.

**N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.7(a) 2 i** states that regulated animals must be housed or caged in a manner that “allows the animal to perform the normal behavior patterns of its species.” The Asian water monitor did not have enough water to swim or soak in. Although I understand the water monitor’s current enclosure is temporary while the

veterinarian is assessing her health after the male Asian water monitor's death, it is imperative that all regulated animals in your possession are housed in enclosures that allow them to perform their natural behavior patterns. While I do appreciate the fact that your husbandry staff bring the water monitor into the back to allow her to soak for a short period of time, the enclosure she is in should allow her to both climb and swim. The current enclosure she is in allows her to do neither. If she must be out of her normal enclosure for an extended amount of time, you should make sure her temporary enclosure allows her to perform her natural behavior patterns, even if it means keeping her off-exhibit.

Per **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.7(a)2 ii**, animals must be housed or caged in a manner that “prevents disease, liberation or accidental injury to the animal and the public.” At the time of our visit, we discussed the mortality of the male Asian water monitor. It's understood that these animals can become territorial and aggressive towards one another. CPO Carman and I were concerned that the two water monitors were fighting with each other, which may have potentially caused fatal injuries to the male. You and your staff must **immediately** intervene in any sign of aggression among animals housed in the same enclosure and the animals should be separated as soon as possible. The Wildlife Permits Unit requests a copy of the necropsy done on the male Asian water monitor, due **October 5, 2023**.

Additionally, I was concerned with the amount of feather plucking done by the two red and green macaws in your possession. While a small amount of plucking is normal for birds in captivity, the amount of missing feathers was very alarming. Although you stated your veterinarian was not concerned about their respective health, I am requesting to see their most recent veterinary reports and the health report from when the veterinarian saw them for feather plucking. The Wildlife Permits Unit must receive these health reports from your veterinarian within 7 days from the date of this letter, **due date October 5, 2023**.

The red tegu had some white abnormalities on his back. While these abnormalities did not appear to be new, neither you nor Ms. Karpuk were aware of them. The tegu must be assessed by your veterinarian immediately. The red tegu's health report must be submitted along with the other requested health reports by **October 5, 2023**.

The blue tongued skink's enclosure had exposed insulation. While you did mention the insulation is nontoxic to animals, the skink could still ingest the insulation, which could ultimately cause a blockage and therefore cause undue harm, illness, or even death to the animal. You must permanently cover up the insulation to prevent the animal from eating it. All other insulation or potential dangers in the other enclosures of regulated animals must also be rectified.

In the letter dated October 26, 2022, one of the corrective actions asked you to “keep food preparation areas away from animals and in a location that can be easily cleaned and sanitized.” I was extremely displeased to see a large tegu, who is currently being assessed by your veterinarian for a suspected liver illness, in such close range to food and food preparation areas. I once again urge you to keep animals, especially those that are sick, away from food and food preparation areas. This will help prevent the spread of disease to other animals.

Per the conditions of your permit, “Regulated wildlife must be in direct control of SeaQuest Woodbridge LLC Animal Handlers. The public contact authorized is restricted to the species indicated on the wildlife inventory list on this permit **and must be controlled at all times by the SeaQuest Woodbridge Animal Handlers. The public may only touch the back of the regulated species with two fingers when the animal is in control of authorized SeaQuest Woodbridge animal handlers. Regulated wildlife must be held by the head and the tail at all times during authorized interactions.**” The screen outside your facility advertised a variety of regulated animals and interactions, many of which were unauthorized. For example, there was a picture of an animal handler holding the red tegu cradled in his arms with two members of the public touching the animal with their whole hands. The head and tail **MUST ALWAYS** be held by the animal handlers. Additionally, the photo advertised feeding of the red tegu by the public, which is **NOT** an authorized interaction. I have reminded

you and your staff numerous times that the only interactions you may conduct are the ones listed on your permit. When I asked if you understood these conditions at the time of our visit, you said that you did. Your permit does **NOT** authorize the feeding of the red tegu. You must **IMMEDIATELY** cease all unauthorized feedings and interactions with the red tegu and any other regulated wildlife you are conducting unauthorized interactions with.

As a reminder, the **ONLY** authorized interactions you may perform in your facility and for all off-site exhibits are:

| <b>SPECIES</b>              | <b>INTERACTION</b> | <b>SCHEDULE</b>  |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--|
| ❖ Various turtle species    | Feeding via tube   | Unscheduled feedings throughout the day  |
| ❖ Linnaeus’s Two-toed Sloth | Feeding via tube   | 5-7min encounters 10x Mon-Sat, 8x Sun; maximum 68 encounters per week                                  |
| ❖ Asian Small-Clawed Otter  | Feeding via tube   | 30min encounters 6x Mon-Sat, 8x Sun; maximum 40 encounters per week                                    |
| ❖ Various reptile species   | Two-finger touch   | Rotating touch interactions, max 2-3x per day; maximum 14-21 encounters per week per individual animal |

**REGULATED REPTILE ENCOUNTER:**

1. Guests may use two fingers to touch the animals’ backs only while the regulated wildlife is in direct control of the SeaQuest animal handlers.
2. The head and tail of the animal must be controlled at all times by SeaQuest animal handlers during these interactions.
3. Each individual animal may not exceed 21 encounters per week.

Per **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.7(a)4**, “The animal shall receive prompt treatment for any illness or injury from a licensed veterinarian. I was extremely concerned to learn about the death of your newly acquired baby sloth. You stated that one of your former husbandry staff, who is a veterinarian tech, was present throughout the nights to care for the young sloth during her short stay in your facility. This would typically lead me to believe that the animal was receiving adequate care. However, the young sloth died less than a month after you acquired her and despite the constant supervision, she still became ill and died. I am requesting all notes and logs pertaining to the baby sloth while she was in your facility. This includes but is not limited to her diet plan, feeding schedule, feeding logs, etc.

Lastly, given all warnings you’ve received from the Wildlife Permits Unit, the numerous legitimate complaints our office has received, and the many concerns our office has had since SeaQuest opened in Woodbridge, your facility is officially on probation from acquiring new regulated animals and implementing new interactions. This probation will last one full year from the date of this letter, ending **September 27, 2024**. During this time, you may not acquire new regulated exotic and nongame animals or new species. For example, if you are permitted to possess 0.0.2 ball pythons and one dies, you may not obtain another. No new regulated exotic and nongame animals may enter your facility either temporarily or permanently for any reason during this probation period. You may not replace any animal that dies or is transferred out of your facility. The only time a regulated exotic and nongame animal may enter or leave your facility is for veterinary purposes or for permanent export.

During this probationary period, your facility must go an entire year without the following concerns:

1. **No legitimate complaints.** These complaints may come from New Jersey Fish and Wildlife employees, any government or municipality entity, members of the public, current staff, or former staff. Duplicate complaints will be discounted.

2. **No unexplained or preventable deaths.** All regulated animals that die must have a necropsy performed. All necropsies must be sent to the Wildlife Permits Unit along with quarterly reports.
3. **No preventable illnesses or injuries.** All illnesses and injuries to regulated animals must be reported to the Wildlife Permits Unit within 48 hours. Keep all animals away from food and food preparation areas. If any regulated animals housed together are showing signs of aggression towards one another, they must be separated immediately.
4. **All quarterly reports must be received by the Wildlife Permits Unit on time.** As a reminder, all quarterly reports are due no later than:
  - a. March 31
  - b. June 30
  - c. September 30
  - d. December 31. This may be submitted with your permit renewal applications.
5. **All permit renewal application materials must be received on time.** Permit renewals are due January 31 each year.
6. **There must be no inconsistencies between your quarterly reports, inventories, and permits.** Every year since the opening of SeaQuest Woodbridge, I have had to ask you to clarify your inventory.
7. **No pest infestations.** Continue to implement pest control measures.

If any of the above items occur during your year of probation, your probationary year will reset to the date of incident or date the Wildlife Permits Unit is notified. The Wildlife Permits Unit will make that distinction. This probationary period will show the New Jersey Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Permits Unit that the animals in your possession are properly being cared for. Once you have successfully completed the full probationary year without any of the above concerns taking place, a letter will be sent to you informing you that your year of probation has been successfully completed and any further steps you may be required to take.

This follow-up letter serves as a warning to the violations and other areas of concern listed above. The following corrective actions must be adhered to **IMMEDIATELY** and going forward for future years.

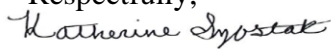
1. **Submit the most recent veterinary records of all regulated exotic and nongame animals.** For any regulated animals that are being treated for ongoing conditions or illnesses, you must submit all records dating back to when these injuries or illnesses first started and when the animals first saw the vet for these injuries/illnesses. The Wildlife Permits Unit must receive these documents within 7 days from the date of this letter, **due date October 5, 2023.**
2. **A necropsy for 1.0.0 Asian water monitor must be submitted to the Wildlife Permits Unit no later than October 5, 2023.** Necropsies for any future regulated animal deaths must also be sent to the Wildlife Permits Unit along with quarterly reports.
3. **Adequate food and water must be provided to all regulated exotic and nongame animals at all times.** At the time of our inspection, the two-toed sloth, blue tongued skink, and Asian water monitor did not have an adequate amount of water in their enclosures. You were asked multiple times during our visit to rectify this.
4. **Appropriate housing, both permanent and temporary, must be provided for all exotic and nongame animals.** The Asian water monitor, for example, must be able to properly climb and swim.

Her current exhibit allows her to do neither. If you are unable to place her in an exhibit that allows her to do so, I strongly urge you to place her where she may do so, even if this enclosure is “off-exhibit.” If she requires constant veterinary care, I strongly urge you to place her in the care of her veterinarian until she is fit to be on exhibit again.

5. **Insulation in all regulated animal exhibits must be properly covered.**
6. **Keep animals, especially sick and injured ones, away from food and food preparation areas.** You were asked to do this in the letter dated October 26, 2022, and you have failed to comply. As you mentioned during the inspection, the large tegu in the back is currently being evaluated by your veterinarian for suspected liver disease. I strongly urge you to set up a quarantine area **away from food and food preparation areas** for sick animals. This will help ensure that food preparation areas can be kept clean and free of diseases.
7. **Cease all unauthorized interactions IMMEDIATELY.** You may only conduct the interactions listed on your permit. Any interactions performed that are not listed on your permit are unauthorized, and you will be subject to violation if any of these interactions are of a continuing nature.
8. **All photos of unauthorized interactions on your social media pages and advertisements must be removed.** In a letter dated April 29, 2021, you were requested to add a disclaimer to any photos that depicted unauthorized interactions or any regulated species not at your location or be taken down. To this date, your facility has not complied, and you will now need to take down any photo or post that depicts unauthorized interactions or any regulated animal not located at your facility.
9. **Continue to prevent further pest infestations.**
10. **Ensure that each regulated animal is housed or caged in a manner that allows it to perform the normal behavior patterns of its species and prevents disease, liberation, or accidental injuries to the animal and the public.**
11. **Submit all notes, logs, and records pertaining to the baby sloth while she was in your facility.** This includes but is not limited to her diet plan, feeding schedule, feeding logs, etc.

Failure to comply to the corrective actions listed above, the conditions of your probation, the Exotic and Nongame Permit Regulations, and the conditions outlined on your permits will result in fines, penalties, and possible revocation of your permit.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Respectfully,  
  
Katherine Szostak  
Assistant Biologist