Wild Animal Interaction Incidents in the U.S.

The following is a partial list of incidents that occurred during interactive wild animal encounters at aquariums, roadside zoos, and traveling exhibits in the U.S. Unfortunately, many incidents are not reported, making the compilation of a complete list impossible. These incidents resulted in 13 animal deaths and over 170 human injuries, including to 39 children.

Contact PETA for documentation.

May 2025/College Station, Texas: A woman had to receive rabies treatment after being bitten by a lemur at a birthday party petting zoo.

September 10, 2024/Oak Harbor, Washington: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) cited Alpha Encounters for failing to ensure minimal risk of harm to animals and the public during exhibition after a sloth bit a guest.

August 3, 2024/Stanton, Michigan: A young girl was bitten on the arm by a capybara at the Anderson & Girls Orchard.

The USDA issued a critical repeat citation to the owner of the facility, Terry Anderson, for failing to have a barrier around the capybara's primary enclosure. The USDA had also cited Anderson for the same issue two days before the incident.

July 13, 2024/Big Rapids, Michigan: A woman was bitten by a camel at the Mecosta County Agricultural Fair requiring medical attention for the wound.

The provider of the camel, Kirk Elya, received a critical repeat citation from the USDA for failing to prevent and minimize the risk of the public and animals being harmed.

June 15, 2024/Newport, Oregon: A sloth bit a guest during an interaction at the Newport Discovery Zoo. The USDA cited owner Blaine Brown for failing to handle animals with minimal risk of harm to animals and the public.

April 5, 2024/Rogers, Arkansas: A parakeet was killed after a guest stepped on them in the aviary at the Blue Zoo.

The USDA issued the facility a critical citation for failing to minimize the risk of birds being harmed during public exhibition.

March 6, 2024/The Woodlands, Texas: A parakeet died after being stepped on in the aviary at The Learning Zoo.

The USDA issued the facility a critical citation for inadequate handling of animals during periods of public exhibition. This citation also included another similar death on February 24, 2024.

February 24, 2024/The Woodlands, Texas: A parakeet died after being stepped on in the aviary at The Learning Zoo.

The USDA issued the facility a critical citation for inadequate handling of animals during periods of public exhibition. This citation also included another similar death on March 6, 2024.

November 24, 2023/Laredo, Texas: A 5-year-old child was bitten on the arm by a ring-tailed lemur at Laredo Safari and Adventure Park. The lemurs were housed

on an island that the facility allowed people to visit, and they could offer the primates food. The attack occurred when the lemur jumped on the child's back to reach for a banana.

The USDA issued Laredo Safari a critical repeat citation for failing to have primates under the direct control and supervision of an experienced handler or trainer at all times during public contact.

October 21, 2023/Brilliant, Alabama: An 8-month-old kangaroo was attacked and injured by a 14-week-old fennec fox at Barking Cow Farms. The licensee had left the animals unattended in an area designated for public interactions. The kangaroo sustained scarring and damage to his ears. Barking Cow Farms received a critical citation for failing to handle animals appropriately.

September 29, 2023/French Lick, Indiana: A parakeet was found dead in the walk-in aviary at Wilstem Inc. after being stepped on by a member of the public. The USDA issued a critical citation to Wilstem for failing to supervise animals in the aviary during public exhibition.

August 23, 2023/Fremont, Ohio: In separate incidents, a capuchin bit two young girls at the Sandusky County Fair. Both attacks were captured on video and posted on social media. The Sandusky County Sheriff's Office and the fair board advised Norris Welch, the owner of the capuchin, that the monkey wouldn't be welcomed back to future Sandusky County Fairs.

The USDA cited Desie Armstrong, the licensee, for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized the risk of harm to them and the public.

July 25, 2023/Grantsville, Utah: A boy was bitten by Gustave, a 3-year-old intact male wallaby, while in the pen with him at Ivie Acres Farm & Petting Zoo. The USDA cited Sherrie Ivie for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized the risk of harm to them and the public.

July 19, 2023/Woodbridge, New Jersey: During a public encounter at SeaQuest Woodbridge, a squirrel bit the toe of a guest, who sought treatment for the injury at an urgent-care facility.

May 18, 2023/Austin, Texas: Biggie, a lemur at Austin Aquarium, jumped onto a woman's shoulder, bit her on the side of her face, and scratched her lip, causing her to seek medical treatment. The USDA issued the facility a repeat critical citation for failing to ensure the safety of both the public and animals during interactive encounters.

May 13, 2023/Trumbull, Connecticut: A sugar glider bit a child during an interactive experience at SeaQuest Trumbull. Five sugar gliders, between the ages of 16 and 18 weeks old, were allowed to run freely over the guests, and one of them bit a guest after the customer squeezed the animal. Staff couldn't identify which sugar glider had bitten the guest, so all five were quarantined by state health officials. The USDA cited SeaQuest for failing to ensure the safety of animals and the public during an encounter.

May 6, 2023/Stockton, Utah: Todd, a red fox, bit a child's finger during a feeding encounter inside the fox enclosure at Otters and Others Zoo and Conservation. As a result of the incident, Todd was confiscated by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and euthanized for rabies testing. The USDA issued a critical citation to the facility for failing to handle him in a way that minimized the risk of harm to the animal and the public.

February 21, 2023/Anderson, South Carolina: A prairie dog bit a child at Ballyhoo Petting Zoo. The USDA issued the establishment a critical citation for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized risk of harm to them and the public.

February 12, 2023/Saginaw, Michigan: A sloth named Sid bit a 15-year-old customer on the arm during an encounter at Custom Creatures. The teenager was reportedly taken to the hospital for preventive rabies treatment and antibiotics. The USDA issued a direct citation to the facility for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized the risk of harm to them and the public. Sid was placed in quarantine for 30 days by the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services.

January 24, 2023/Dahlonega, Georgia: In two separate incidents, animals bit members of the public at Chestatee Wildlife Preserve. A bison and a zebra bit patrons on the fingers as they were being fed. No attendants were present. The USDA issued a critical citation to the facility for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized the risk of harm to them and the public.

September 22, 2022/Fort Worth, Texas: A wallaby bit a child on the finger at SeaQuest Fort Worth. The USDA issued the facility a repeat citation and stated on the inspection report, "This facility has a history of public injury during [its] 'animal encounters.'" The inspection report said that SeaQuest "needs to ensure that animals and people are not put into situations where either is injured or stressed during these encounters."

August 27, 2022/Austin, Texas: A kinkajou bit a boy on the hand during an encounter at Austin Aquarium, and the child had to seek medical treatment. The USDA issued the facility a critical repeat citation and an official warning for failing to handle animals in a way that helped ensure the safety of both the public and animals.

July 24, 2022/Hauppauge, New York: A member of the public was bitten and/or scratched by a sloth named Edward during an encounter offered by exhibitor Larry Wallach. The injured individual required immediate care by a medical professional. The Suffolk County Department of Health ordered Edward to be quarantined for 30 days for rabies observation, and the USDA issued a critical citation to Wallach for failing to handle animals in a way that helped ensure the safety of both the public and animals.

July 16, 2022/Littleton, Colorado: A Savannah cat bit a member of the public at SeaQuest Littleton, breaking the skin. The facility was unsure which cat was involved in the incident, which meant that all three Savannah cats had to be quarantined for six months. The USDA issued the facility a critical citation for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized the risk of harm to them and the public. The inspector noted that "animals involved in injuring the public could be at risk of euthanasia."

June 13, 2022/Austin, Texas: A ring-tailed lemur bit a 10-year-old boy at the Austin Aquarium. During an animal encounter, the lemur "jumped towards the child and as the boy was putting his hands up to cover his face, the lemur bit his hand." The USDA issued the facility a critical citation and an official warning for failing to handle animals in a way that helped ensure the safety of both the public and animals.

April 20, 2022/Houston, Texas: A lemur scratched a minor on the leg during a public interaction. The USDA issued Houston Interactive Aquarium & Animal Preserve a repeat citation for failing to ensure minimal risk of harm to the health and well-being of the public and the animal.

March 19, 2022/Bogart, Georgia: A 1-year-old child was injured by lemurs during an encounter in which the child and their parents were allowed to enter an enclosure with free-roaming lemurs. The animals jumped on the child's head and shoulders, causing a scratch below one eye and an injury to the back of the head. The toddler was taken to the hospital for treatment. The USDA issued a critical citation to Marek Lipold, owner of Half Moon Petting Zoo, for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized the risk of harm to them and the public.

February 19, 2022/Woodbridge, New Jersey: A woman fainted after an eel bit her finger at SeaQuest Woodbridge.

February 8, 2022/Trumbull Connecticut: A kinkajou scratched a child in the face at SeaQuest Trumbull during an encounter. The child started post-exposure treatment for rabies after the business refused to provide vaccination records. Two kinkajous were quarantined for 30 days. The USDA cited SeaQuest for failing to handle the animal properly.

February 2, 2022/Winder, Georgia: During a USDA inspection of the Hand Me Down Zoo, the inspector observed an apparently hyperactive female otter bite the licensee, causing two significant bleeding punctures. Yet the same otter was allowed to roam freely and unrestrained with patrons seated on a bench or on the floor of the animal's enclosure during public interactions. The USDA cited the zoo for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized the risk of harm to them and the public.

January 6, 2022/Boise, Idaho: Odie, a coatimundi, jumped up and bit a young girl on the hand as she was walking out of the exhibit, and on a separate occasion, Gene, a collared brown lemur, bit a young girl's hand at Babby Farms. Both girls received medical attention. The USDA issued the facility a critical citation for failing to provide sufficient distance and/or a barrier between the animals and the public to help ensure the safety of the animals and the public.

November 13, 2021/Layton, Utah: Chip, a small-clawed otter, bit the thumb of a guest during an interaction session at SeaQuest Utah. The USDA issued the facility a repeat critical citation over the incident and factored it into a $4,500 penalty issued to SeaQuest Holdings for alleged violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

September 28, 2021/Layton, Utah: A guest was bitten by a kinkajou at SeaQuest Utah. Security footage showed that the visitor and a child were attempting to interact with the animal and weren't observed or stopped by an employee. The USDA issued the facility a repeat critical citation over the incident and factored it into a $4,500 penalty issued to SeaQuest Holdings for alleged violations of the AWA.

August 23, 2021/Temperance, Michigan: A 10-week-old red fox bit a child during an exhibition. The USDA issued a critical citation to Zachery Keeler over the incident.

August 2021/Aurora, Indiana: A prairie dog bit a member of the public at Jayden's Jungle Exotic Pets. The person was hospitalized approximately one month later. The USDA issued a critical citation to the facility for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized the risk of harm to them and the public.

July 27, 2021/Gulf Shores, Alabama: A kangaroo at the Zoo Foundation bit a guest during a public encounter. The visitor went to urgent care to receive a tetanus toxoid vaccine, and the USDA issued the facility a critical citation for failing to handle animals

in a way that minimized the risk of harm to them and the public.

June 24, 2021/Woodbridge, New Jersey: When an employee at SeaQuest Woodbridge shut a door, a flying squirrel, who was trying to escape, became caught in it and died. The USDA issued the facility a critical citation for failing to handle animals as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that didn't cause trauma, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort.

June 16, 2021/Ethel, Louisiana: During an inspection at Barn Hill Preserve, three middle school–aged children told the inspector that they had been bitten during a 30-minute "swim with otters" interaction involving three adult Asian small-clawed otters. The USDA issued the facility a repeat citation for the incident.

April 15, 2021/Folsom, California: According to a Facebook review with photos, an arowana fish at SeaQuest Folsom badly bit a toddler's hand.

February 7, 2021/Ethel, Louisiana: An otter in a pool at Barn Hill Preserve bit a woman, causing her to bleed. The USDA cited the facility for failing to handle otters properly in order to ensure the safety of animals and the public.

January 20, 2021/Fort Worth, Texas: A sloth at SeaQuest Fort Worth bit a member of the public after they attempted to pet the animal while an attendant's back was turned. The facility was cited by the USDA for not fully monitoring an animal encounter.

December 26, 2020/Ethel, Louisiana: An otter bit the thumb of a guest participating in the Barn Hill Preserve otter swim program, breaking the skin**.** The USDA cited the facility for failing to handle otters properly in order to ensure the safety of animals and the public.

December 2, 2020/Fort Worth, Texas: A child who was able to reach over the side of an enclosure at SeaQuest Fort Worth was bitten by an adult capybara, causing a bleeding wound. The USDA cited the facility for failing to have a sufficient barrier around the enclosure.

November 17, 2020/Panama City Beach, Florida: Peach, a lemur at ZooWorld, attempted to grab a child's mask and bit her on the cheek during an interaction. The child was taken to the hospital for treatment, and the USDA issued a critical citation to the facility for failing to handle animals in a way that minimized the risk of harm to them and the public.

July 16, 2020/Trumbull, Connecticut: An otter bit a 9-year-old child's finger during a public encounter at SeaQuest Trumbull. A six-month quarantine from a previous biting incident had ended just two weeks previously.

February 23, 2020/Fort Worth, Texas: A coatimundi at SeaQuest Fort Worth jumped on a child during a public interaction and scratched or bit the child's lip. As a result, the animal was quarantined for a 30-day period.

February 2, 2020/Smithfield, Illinois: A ring-tailed lemur at Browns Oakridge Zoo bit a member of the public on the hand, necessitating medical treatment. The lemur was wearing a belly band with an attached lead, yet he was able to jump and inflict this injury. The lemur was quarantined for 30 days following the incident, and the USDA issued the facility a critical citation.

January 26, 2020/Nashville, Indiana: A coatimundi at Zoo'Opolis Exotic Petting Zoo bit a member of the public, causing an injury to one finger. The public was permitted to enter a room that housed two raccoons and

two coatimundi and then freely interact with them. An attendant was present but didn't have control of the animals, who jumped and climbed on visitors. The USDA issued a repeat citation over the incident.

December 27, 2019/Layton, Utah: Gus, a South American coatimundi, bit a guest and an employee during a public interaction session at SeaQuest Utah. Two coatimundis were allowed free physical contact with seated guests within the enclosure. The USDA issued the facility a critical repeat citation for allowing public interactions with animals without adequate barriers or direct control of them and factored these injuries into a $4,500 penalty issued to SeaQuest Holdings for alleged violations of the AWA.

December 4, 2019/Tacoma, Washington: A visitor to Debbie Dolittle's Animal Experience was reportedly bitten on the arm while petting a capybara. The guest sought medical treatment for the bite, and the incident was reported to local animal control by the medical facility that treated the person. The USDA issued the facility a repeat citation over the incident and factored it into a $7,500 fine levied against the facility in July 2021. This fine also covered numerous incidents between April 22, 2019, and February 17, 2020, in which approximately 79 customers were injured "in varying degrees of seriousness during interactions with animals."

November 18, 2019/Fort Worth, Texas: The USDA issued SeaQuest Fort Worth a repeat citation for failing to handle four young coatimundi properly in order to ensure minimal risk of injury to the animals and the public. One inspector asked the facility to demonstrate how animals are handled during public interactions. The inspectors then entered the enclosure and sat down, and two coatimundis were allowed to climb into their laps. An inspector noted, "The method of control was to grab the animals if they started a behavior that was not appropriate. One of the coati was able to grab my arm in its mouth before the attendant was able to restrain [the animal]."

November 11, 2019/Layton, Utah: Gus, a South American coatimundi at SeaQuest Utah, bit a guest and an employee during a public interaction. The USDA issued the facility a critical citation over the incident and factored this incident into a $4,500 penalty issued to SeaQuest for alleged violations of the AWA.

August 27, 2019/Tacoma, Washington: The USDA cited Debbie Dolittle's Animal Experience over its public interactions with Asian small-clawed otters and sloths, during which there were no restraints on the animals nor a barrier between the animals and the public. During these interactions, the licensee reported to the USDA at least two incidents in which otters had bitten visitors and at least one in which a sloth had bitten a visitor. The USDA fined the facility $7,500 in July 2021 for seven alleged violations of the AWA, including these incidents. This fine also covered numerous incidents between April 22, 2019, and February 17, 2020, in which approximately 79 customers had been injured "in varying degrees of seriousness during interactions with animals."

August 26, 2019/Layton, Utah: An otter bit a customer's finger during a feeding encounter at SeaQuest Utah. The animal was quarantined for 10 days because of possible rabies exposure. This incident was factored into a $4,500 penalty issued by the USDA for alleged violations of the AWA in December of 2022.

August 24, 2019/Austin, Texas: A lemur named Jasmine at the Austin Aquarium bit a patron's hand during an encounter. The

animal was quarantined for 30 days because of possible rabies exposure.

August 21, 2019/Trumbull, Connecticut: An otter at SeaQuest Trumbull bit a 12-year-old child's thumb. The animal was quarantined for six months because of possible rabies exposure.

July 1, 2019/Roseville, Minnesota: Flash, a two-toed sloth, bit a guest during an encounter. SeaQuest Roseville failed to obtain the victim's contact information after the incident, but the person later reported to the Minnesota Department of Health that the wound exhibited "redness and puffiness." Flash was quarantined for 30 days after the incident.

June 19, 2019/Fort Worth, Texas: The USDA issued SeaQuest Fort Worth a repeat citation for failing to reduce the risk of injury to visitors during public encounters with an Asian small-clawed otter. Since the previous citation on February 5, 2019, there had been two incidents in which patrons sustained minor wounds from this animal.

April 20, 2019/Nashville, Indiana: A coatimundi at Zoo'Opolis Exotic Petting Zoo injured a guest. The public was allowed to enter a room and interact freely with the animals housed there. An attendant was present but didn't have direct control of the animals, who were loose. The USDA issued a critical citation for the incident.

April 19, 2019/Nashville, Indiana: A child was injured by a wolf hybrid at Zoo'Opolis Exotic Petting Zoo, sustaining an abrasion to the face and the top of the head. The child's grandmother was also reportedly injured. The USDA issued a critical citation for the incident.

March 30, 2019/Fort Worth, Texas: An Asian small-clawed otter at SeaQuest Fort Worth named Xander bit a visitor on the leg during an "otter interaction," leaving several teeth marks and causing soreness, redness, and a rash. As a result, the animal was quarantined for 30 days.

February 23, 2019/Fort Worth, Texas: An Asian small-clawed otter at SeaQuest Fort Worth named Xander bit a 6-year-old child. As a result, the animal was quarantined for 30 days.

February 5, 2019/Fort Worth, Texas: The USDA cited SeaQuest Fort Worth for failing to reduce the risk of injury to visitors during public encounters with an Asian small-clawed otter. Two visitors were injured during the month that the animal was on exhibit.

January 18, 2019/Littleton, Colorado: Stormin' Norman, a tortoise at SeaQuest Littleton, bit a patron's hand.

January 7, 2019/Littleton, Colorado: An iguana at SeaQuest Littleton jumped onto a 6-year-old child's chest and "got a claw inside her mouth."

January 5, 2019/Littleton, Colorado: A pufferfish at SeaQuest Littleton bit a child on the thumb.

January 2, 2019/Littleton, Colorado: An iguana at SeaQuest Littleton trying to climb a customer's leg scratched the wrist and hand of an employee who tried to remove the animal.

December 27, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: An iguana bit an 8-year-old child who was feeding the animal at SeaQuest Littleton.

December 21, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: A pufferfish bit the thumb of a customer who was feeding the animal at SeaQuest Littleton.

December 7, 2018/Orlando, Florida: According to the *Miami Herald*, a sloth provided by Barn Hill Preserve bit a secretary during a photo op at Camelot Elementary School in Orlando, Florida. The secretary was treated for a hand injury.

November 25, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: An iguana bit a customer's finger while being fed at SeaQuest Littleton.

November 20, 2018/ Littleton, Colorado: An iguana bit a customer's finger while being fed at SeaQuest Littleton.

November 11, 2018/Austin, Texas: A lemur bit a 10-year-old girl during an interaction at Austin Aquarium. The animal was placed in quarantine for 30 days.

November 6, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: Spartacus, a water monitor, bit a customer's finger. According to the injured visitor's Yelp review, the bite caused what appeared to be serious lacerations to his hand. The patron wrote that "[SeaQuest] handled everything so poorly but promised to take care of everything and sent me to their workers comp facility to treat me. After three weeks of avoiding me they sent me a letter denying responsibility."

November 2, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: A pacu bit a 7-year-old child who was feeding the fish at SeaQuest Littleton.

October 28, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: A horn shark at SeaQuest Littleton bit a customer while being fed.

October 24, 2018/San Antonio, Texas: The USDA cited the San Antonio Aquarium after lemurs bit or scratched several customers. The facility's records described three incidents in which lemurs had bitten or scratched members of the public during interactive encounters. A lemur scratched a boy's arm and then "jumped on [his] head grabbing him aggressively." According to the USDA inspection report, "Three of the six [l]emurs used in public encounters have bitten or scratched the public."

October 23, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: An iguana at SeaQuest Littleton bit a customer while being fed.

October 20, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: While being fed, an iguana bit a customer at SeaQuest Littleton.

October 15, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: An iguana at SeaQuest Littleton bit a customer while being fed.

October 4, 2018/Fort Worth, Texas: The USDA issued SeaQuest Forth Worth a "Teachable Moment," instructing the facility to address the multiple incidents in which a capybara had bitten or scratched members of the public.

October 3, 2018/Pingree Grove, Illinois: A male giraffe on exhibit at Goebbert's Pumpkin Patch reached over an enclosure fence and picked up a child car seat, then dropped it. No injuries were reported. The USDA cited the facility over the incident.

September 29, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: A lorikeet bit a patron at SeaQuest Littleton during a feeding encounter.

September 27, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: At SeaQuest Littleton, a wallaby "grabbed" an employee's arm "and scratched & kicked causing the employee's right arm to bleed." The inspection report also noted that "occasionally [the wallaby] does jump or nip."

August 27, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: An iguana bit a customer on the hand at SeaQuest Littleton.

On the same day, a porcupine pufferfish bit a customer who put her finger in a tank. According to the incident report, the patron then flung the fish out of the tank but caught the animal before he or she hit the ground. The woman's husband later reported that she had called 911 to report numbness and difficulty breathing as a result of the incident.

August 22, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: An iguana at SeaQuest Littleton bit a child on the finger as she fed the animal.

June 26, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: A lizard at SeaQuest Littleton bit a person during feeding.

June 15, 2018/Littleton, Colorado: A patron at SeaQuest Littleton kicked and stomped on birds in the aviary, killing five of them and injuring others.

April 15, 2018/Waco, Texas: Dirk, a ring-tailed lemur at Critters Exotic Pets, bit a customer, who needed immediate medical attention. The lemur was wearing a harness and leash but was not under the direct control of the licensee. The USDA issued a critical citation to the facility for failing to handle Dirk so that there was a minimal risk of harm to him and the public.

February 28, 2018/East Troy, Wisconsin: The USDA issued a critical citation to Timberlee Camp after a skunk at the facility bit a person who had reached through the enclosure. The skunk was euthanized. The USDA cited the facility for failing to provide sufficient distance and/or barriers between the animals and the public to help ensure the safety and well-being of both.

February 24, 2018/Fort Myers, Florida: An employee of Everglades Jacks brought a 9-year-old boy behind a barrier to feed a raccoon. The animal bit the boy's finger, inflicting puncture wounds. The raccoon was euthanized, and the USDA issued a direct citation to the facility for failing to help ensure minimal risk of harm to the animal and the public.

November 28, 2017/Fort Worth, Texas: A SeaQuest Fort Worth patron reported on Facebook that a capybara had bitten her daughter on the ankle twice, breaking the skin. After staff pried the latched-on capybara off the guest, the facility continued to allow public interactions with the animal.