



# Captivity jeopardizes animals' wellbeing



## Out Loud

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As a kid, I loved going to the zoo. Walking through the different exhibits, I felt like I was traveling all over the world. A gorilla places its enormous hand on the glass wall curiously looking at the many people who were watching. Several feet away, a large grey elephant roams, its calf following closely behind. Nearby, a lion shakes its golden mane and roars ferociously.

When I go to a zoo, I learn to appreciate just how amazing these animals are. Every once in a while I would hear someone say, "Poor thing, it has to stay all caged up," but since I loved going to the zoo so much, I never thought about it. In my

mind, all zoos were good. What I had not considered was that, like most things, there is a good side and a bad side.

According to *National Geographic*, "A zoo is a place where animals live in captivity and are put on display for people to view." Originally, zoos called menageries were created with the purpose of entertainment and so wealthy people could show off.

Zoos have improved greatly since they were first created. Nowadays, zoos have taken on more roles like educating people about these animals.

However, many zoos do not have the capacity to provide a good enough environment for animals. Some animals thrive in captivity, but for others, captivity hurts. According to the *American Association for the*

*Advancement of Science*, polar bears are used to having a range of 1000 kilometers to live in which is about 1 million times larger than the space they have in a zoo.

Animals in zoos also suffer from zoochosis. Zoochosis is a term used to describe repetitive behavior that is caused by forcing animals to live in a caged environment. Zoochosis can also include repetitively brushing skin causing a loss of hair, bar biting, and self harm.

It is not reasonable to think that a zoo could replicate the amount of space an animal would have in the wild, but zoos should not keep animals who suffer greatly in small spaces.

In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Animal Welfare Act. This law sets regulations for the standards of

care for specific animals which cover "minimum requirements for handling, housing, feeding, weathering, sanitation, shelter from extremes of weather and temperatures, adequate veterinary care." However, a lot of animals are not protected like cold-blooded animals.

The *USDA* has also removed all Animal Welfare Act data and reports from their website in 2017. This means that the public cannot see inspection reports of places like zoos, puppy mills, or research facilities. The *USDA* has not given a clear reason as to why the data was removed.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has also changed their approach to violations of the Animal Welfare Act. Instead of fines and confiscations, the *USDA* believes in an "educational approach." This

means cruelty in zoos and among breeders is not taken seriously

The Animal Welfare Act needs to be updated. The main purpose of a zoo should be to protect all animals and to educate the public, while not prioritizing the zoo over the animals' welfare. Animals need to be given more space and the *USDA* needs to take the Animal Welfare Act more seriously.

We should all love going to the zoo, but it should not be at the expense of animals. We should go to the zoo to appreciate the beauty of animals and to learn about them. If the *USDA* does not fix the Animal Welfare Act, soon being able to see penguins waddling across the ice or monkeys swinging from trees will be a thing of the past.