

I, MELISSA A. HINDMAN, being duly sworn on oath make the following statement:

I make this statement freely without promise of reward to anyone. My address is  
Davis, California

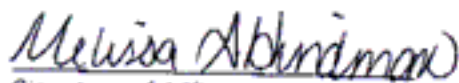
I am a senior at the University of California, Davis studying to get my Bachelors Degree in Wildlife and Conservation Biology. My educational background includes education about the behavior, habitat and anatomy of wild and domestic animals. My field experience includes caring for and working with horses and horse trainers for eight years, working on a goat farm for one year, working with other livestock through school, and working at the California Regional Primate Center for two and a half years. My experience includes the handling of different animals, administration of certain medical treatments, and behavioral observations.

During the period April through October 1999 and March through September 2000, I was employed as a seasonal keeper at Six Flags Marine World in Vallejo in the Land Animal Keeping Department. In this capacity, I worked with the animals in the petting zoo and Gentle Jungle, as well as with the giraffes, camels and kangaroos.

During my tenure at Marine World, I witnessed numerous instances of mistreatment of animals and what I believe to be violations of the Animal Welfare Act. I was disturbed to realize that there was no mechanism for reporting concerns about animal mistreatment and animal welfare to management at the park. When complaints were made to upper management, the information was twisted around, and the person making the complaint was accused of being a liar. To my knowledge, there was never any action taken against individuals in management positions who were responsible for negligence and animal mistreatment. There was nowhere to report concerns, and nowhere to go to improve the treatment of animals at the park.

The personnel in my department, particularly those in supervisory positions, lacked training and experience with animals. The supervisor of the Keeping Department, Amy Canova, began working at the park as a hostess and worked her way up into a animal care management position. To my knowledge she had no training and little apparent knowledge about animal care, training, behavior and husbandry.

During my tenure at Marine World, I witnessed Ms. Canova hit animals so hard as to cause welts or bruises on them. In June or July of 1999, I witnessed Ms. Canova hit a camel named Miles so hard with a crop that it put a welt on his stomach. The wound was actually bleeding from the impact. Ms. Canova just laughed the injury off, saying something along the lines of "oops, I guess I hit him too hard." To my knowledge, Ms. Canova was not trained in proper handling of the camel and in my opinion she used the crop in a completely inappropriate and inhumane manner. Other Marine World employees, in addition to myself, witnessed this incident.



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In August 2000, Ms. Canova was in a training session with one of the miniature donkeys named Tomba. She had brought the donkey into the back area because he would not listen to her. I witnessed Ms. Canova dragging the animal down the road by his halter. She then got behind him and beat him with his lead rope to get him to go forward. She also hit the animal on his back because he would not move up to her command. Tomba tried to get away by moving over toward the brush. Ms. Canova did not use any appropriate training techniques and she actually stood behind the animal while trying to get him to move forward. (Anybody with basic animal behavior training knows that to get an animal to move forward, you must stand in front of him so he knows what to do). But Ms. Canova just kept pushing on the donkey and beating on him in an effort to get him to move forward. The incident was one of the worst things I ever saw. It was clear to all the employees who witnessed this that the donkey was absolutely terrified of Ms. Canova. When we expressed concern about how Tomba was treated, Ms. Canova just got mad at all of us for not helping her.

Another employee and myself complained in writing about this incident to Marine World management. My complaint, which was dated September 12, 2000 and sent to the human resources department at the park and to the president of the Six Flags corporation, also addressed general concerns about the treatment of animals and employees at the park. Marine World never responded to either complaint. The Six Flags corporation never responded to my letter either.

During both of my seasons at the park, I witnessed numerous incidents like the above, in which Ms. Canova or the second in command, Tracy Kotyluk, a trainer also lacking in experience and training, would beat on animals in an effort to get them to do something. For example, I saw llamas beaten with a lead rope in order to get them to do something. Ms. Canova and Ms. Kotyluk lacked proper training in animal handling, training and behavioral techniques. In my opinion, they did not know what they were doing. The animals became terrified of their handlers. This made it difficult for other people like myself who would not beat them to walk the animals. The animals were so terrified, they wouldn't cooperate. They were not properly trained and just afraid of getting beaten.

On one occasion, Ms. Canova told me that she had used a twitch and a hot shot, which is basically a stun gun, on Tomba the miniature donkey. She said in a boastful manner that the sound of the stun gun made him go into a rage. Then she used a stud chain (a chain that is used to control full grown adult male horses, similar to a twitch) on him. I was shocked at this completely inappropriate handling, and almost cried at the thought of this miniature donkey being subjected to such brutality.

In some instances, this lack of proper handling and training presented a safety threat to employees and park goers. For example, in June or July of 1999, Ms. Kotyluk took out a camel a young camel named Kenji, who was one-and-a-half years old, out for a walk. Ms. Kotyluk had

  
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another employee named Shannon to back her up. Ms. Kotyluk totally lost control of Kenji and started hitting him with a crop and screaming at him. The other trainer, Shannon, tried to help, but there was not much she could do since she did not have the lead. Ms. Kotyluk pinned the camel up against the fence and was trying to get him to cooperate through brute force. I was present during this incident and was left with the task of directing members of the public away from the situation.

Sometimes camels were taken to the front of the park in the morning before the park opened. As the rides were being tested, the noise from them made the camels highly agitated, bouncing and kicking out in fear.

It was common for untrained people who had no idea how to handle camels to take these animals out for a walk. These walks frequently entailed close contact with the public. Ms. Kotyluk's lack of control and improper handling of camels caused the camels to kick other trainers on other occasions. I believe that the fact that these large animals are taken for walks by people totally inexperienced in the proper training and handling of camels presents a public safety threat. The fact is that these individuals cannot control the camels and an injury to an employee or park visitor is just an accident waiting to happen.

Many of the animals in this department were simply neglected. There were deficiencies in feeding, housing and veterinary care. For example, the petting zoo animals were neglected. There were 22 - 25 sheep when I began at the park 1999, but by the time I left in 2000 there were just 18 or 19 left. The rest had died. At necropsy, many of these sheep showed severe internal abnormalities and internal and external abscesses. To my knowledge, no tissues were ever sent out for histopathology analysis. I was concerned that if these ailments were prevalent in the herd, the cause could be an infectious disease that required quarantine. But the cause was never determined.

The sheep were not fed properly. I complained many times that they needed to be fed more. Sheep and goats are selective grazers and they need enough food so they can have a choice of what to eat. Ms. Canova had instructed us to feed twenty sheep 4 flakes of oat hay and 1/2 flake of alfalfa. I told her that I believed this was not enough, but she ignored me. Finally, the veterinarian told her to increase the food, which she did for awhile. But then Ms. Canova noticed that the sheep were not eating all the food -- leaving food behind -- which is normal for sheep because of selective grazing. So Ms. Canova said that the food left behind was wasted money, and she instructed us to cut back on the food again. The sheep continued to lose weight. Their ribs stuck out. This was very apparent when they lost their winter coats. Numerous park visitors asked me what was wrong with the sheep.

In addition to being improperly fed the sheep also had very poor living conditions. The barn which they were kept in at night had holes in the walls and was falling apart, and there was also a rat infestation. On several occasions I set a up to 7 traps in the barn and the next morning there would be a rat in every one of them. There was also an infestation in the Land Animal kitchen, this is where all of the produce and meat is kept for the animals. There were several mornings



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that I would go to clean the kitchen and there would be between 5 and 7 dead rats in the traps.

The outdoor petting zoo area was very uneven with many large holes and dips in the ground, which was tripping hazard to guests. The gate at the entrance to the petting zoo was also in need of maintenance, and on several occasions boards would fall off creating another hazard to park guests. These problems were haphazardly fixed throughout the season with no real effort going into permanently fixing them.

I saw that the kangaroos were not treated properly either. Many of them suffered from abscesses on their mouths and cheeks. To my knowledge, the causes of death for two Kangaroos who died were not determined. (See below.) No effort was made to determine the cause of the abscesses.


The kangaroos and wallabies were moved from the original Australian Walkabout exhibit to an area where the flamingos were formerly kept in order to make room for the Dinosaur ride. There were approximately 8 kangaroos (4 red, 4 gray), 20 Bennet's wallabies and 6 Damas wallabies who were moved to this too-small area with improper groundcover and bedding (sand). They were not being fed an appropriate diet. The back pens where the animals were kept at night were made of rotting wood. They had cement floors and old outdated heaters.

Sometime during the 2000 season Marine World brought in a kangaroo expert at the request of an employee. This expert said that the animals needed 1) a larger environment; 2) a different groundcover and bedding because the sand was bad for the feet; and 3) a modified diet which eliminated produce. During my tenure, Marine World never implemented any of these changes. My overall impression was that the park did not want to spend any money to make improvements for the animals. My supervisor, Ms. Canova, said repeatedly that it would cost too much money to implement improvements or changes suggested by employees to help animals.

I am aware of the deaths of a number of wallabies and kangaroos after they were moved from the Australian Walkabout exhibit in 1997. At least two, and possibly 4 wallabies died prior to my tenure at Marine World. Two of these were albino wallabies. During my tenure, 3 wallabies died. One was a baby.

Also during my tenure, 2 kangaroos died. One of these was Gibson, who was 6 or 7 years and died during the summer of 2000. At necropsy, he showed internal abnormalities, including liver deterioration to the point where virtually no living tissue was present. His internal organs were basically molded together. I've taken anatomy courses and I've never seen internal organs that looked like that. He also had external abscesses. The veterinarian had no idea what the cause of death was and to my knowledge never attempted to find out the cause of the internal abnormalities and liver degeneration.

The second kangaroo who died was Murray, who was at least 8 years old and was euthanized in August 2000. He had suffered for at least a month from a deteriorating jaw that prevented him

  
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from chewing. He was in obvious pain. Another employee and I repeatedly asked our supervisor, Ms. Canova, to have Murray euthanized. But she refused for at least a month. Toward the end, another employee and I just sat with Murray and cried because he was suffering so profoundly and there was nothing we could do.

I saw that many of the petting zoo animals were neglected as well. For example the 2 pot-bellied pigs did not receive proper treatment during my tenure at Marine World. They rarely received veterinary care, although they are old and arthritic. They received glucosamine in their food to treat the arthritis, but it did not appear to be sufficient or effective in alleviating the condition. And, they did not have their hooves clipped, as needed every few months. These pigs already had a hard time walking because of arthritis, and having long, ungroomed hooves only worsed the situation. My supervisor, Ms. Canova, is responsible for arranging a time to have the hooves trimmed, and it took her three months to do this despite my repeated requests. And then when she did the task, she only had the hooves of one of the pigs done. It took 2-3 months more for her to work on the other pig. That was at the end of the season. On more than one occasion, I fielded questions from the public about why the pigs couldn't walk properly.


There are four mouflan sheep who were neglected as well. They were rarely given any attention and they were fed daily just 1/4 flake of alfalfa and a little grain for all four sheep. In my opinion, this is inadequate feeding for these animals.

The animals with whom I worked with were also not handled or restrained properly when they needed medical care. The employees lacked training in the proper handling and restraint of the animals. For example, when employees wanted to catch the mouflan sheep for blood draws and vaccination, they roped one of them with a cattle rope. Others were grabbed and chased at random, pinned down and basically just handled with brute force. Roundups for the other petting zoo sheep were similarly handled. In some cases, the animals were bloodied in the process. For blood draws, the employees would twist the heads of the sheep by the horns. If there were no horns, they would grab the animals' necks. They were not restrained in the proper position. Llamas were placed in the camel chute, which was too big for them, so they were restrained by ropes that pinned their heads against the pole of the chute.

In addition, there was no chute for the giraffes, so if any of those animals were in need of medical treatment, there was no way to restrain them.

One result of this mishandling and manhandling is that the animals were terrified of all the trainers and keepers, making the animals, of course, more difficult to handle, especially by those of us who refused to beat them and use brute force against them.

I also believe that veterinary care is inadequate at the facility. While the veterinarian, Dr. Laurie Gage, is an extremely nice person, she seems to know very little about exotic animals. I am unaware as to whether or not she has any training and/or experience dealing with the land animals located at Marine World. She appears to have somewhat more familiarity with marine



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mammals. Many times Dr. Gage did not know how to treat a particular illness or injury, and would frequently ask the keepers for their advice on what to do. With the exception of 1 employee who was a veterinary technician, the keepers and trainers had no medical training and were not qualified to make medical decisions.

As one example of this situation, a camel named Jamie suffered from allergies and needed seasonal medication. Dr. Gage would never examine Jamie and initiate treatment, however. Instead she asked Ms. Canova whether she thought Jamie needed medication. If Ms. Canova answered yes, Jamie got the medication. If she said no, the camel didn't get treated. It was the same situation with Miles the camel and pain medication. Ms. Canova was not qualified to make medical decisions. And, given her frequently stated concern about the financial bottom line, putting her in charge of medical decisions for animals could be a serious conflict of interest.

During my tenure, the other veterinarian on staff was just part-time, working only one day per week. When any animal was injured or became ill, all the employees would hope that this veterinarian was on duty to care for it. Most of the employees were deeply concerned about Dr. Gage's competence.

As stated above, the veterinary staff made little or no attempt to determine causes of death and prevent further deaths of animals. As stated above, both the sheep and kangaroos suffered from abscesses. To my knowledge, nobody ever investigated the cause to determine whether their housing environment, bedding or something they were eating was the cause of the abscess. When they died, nothing was done to figure out the cause.

When the USDA would come to make their inspections the supervisor of my department made sure to inform all of the employees that there was going to be an inspection. Normally the inspector would come to the Keeping areas last, which allowed the staff time to clean up and fix any problems. There was always a rush to make sure all of the areas were clean and orderly (the way they should be all of the time and were not). The USDA inspector never saw what the department areas really looked like on a day to day basis because Amy always made sure that we cleaned up all of the messes. This to my knowledge is not appropriate, since the areas should always be in proper order and with in the USDA regulations.

In conclusion, I believe that the lack of training of employees, improper handling of animals, abuse of animals, improper feeding and housing of animals, and lack of veterinary care that I witnessed at Marine World constitute violations of the Animal Welfare Act. I remain deeply concerned that the animals in the Keeping Department continue to be mistreated at the park.

I have read this statement and affirm under oath, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746 and under penalty of perjury, that the foregoing statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

*Rhondi Hindman*

*Melissa A Hindman* 3/14/01  
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