

AZA Denied WOES Application for Certification

In September 2000, Wildlife on Easy Street applied to the American Zoological Association for Certification as a Related Facility. The hearing was held in Colorado in March 2001 and was attended by Jamie Veronica and Carole Lewis. The board denied our application and stated the following reasons for doing so:

"Concern about the amount of visitor contact with cats

Lack of any trained zoological professionals on staff

Need to place zoological professionals on the advisory board

Need to increase the ratio of paid staff to volunteers

Need to continue developing formal veterinary program

Need to finish perimeter fencing."

"We suggest you consider a mentor for your facility who can review and discuss AZA philosophies and standards with WOES, and help your facility prepare for certification at a later date in the future. We will be happy to assign someone, if you so desire, and stand ready to work with you in ensuring that Wildlife on Easy Street is well positioned when it next makes application for certification."

Based upon the fact that AZA did not state any obstacle that we cannot overcome we feel confident that in time we will be able to become

accredited. Our formal veterinary program is in place and our perimeter fence extension for six to eight feet will be done this summer. Our staff are attending AZA classes and of course we would love to be able to pay the people who have donated their time for all these years.

I think the only contentious "issue" with AZA would be the animal contact. AZA did not seem concerned about the animal, due to the precautions we take, but was afraid that touching a wild cat would make people want them as pets. We have instituted an entrance and exit survey of our guests to determine the effectiveness of this close contact in teaching them that exotic animals do not make good pets. It is in its infancy, but we are getting very positive data from the surveys.

From across a barrier a bobcat or caracal or jungle cat still looks like a feasible pet. After actually coming in contact with them and learning that they live to spray and that they tire of you in 5 minutes and then walk away and that they cannot be coaxed to do anything they don't want to do, then guests have a much better understanding of why these animals are not suitable pets. When guests see 18 Servals, but only one of them is handle able, even though all of them were pets, then they realize the likelihood that they would invest \$2000.00 in an animal that would grow up to hate them. It is a message you just can't effectively communicate without bringing people in and showing them on a personal level.



Little Feather - Bobcat



Argentina
Pantagonian Cavy