

FAQ – Animals used in Zoos for Commercial Gain

Are you saying that all zoos should be closed?

The Ontario SPCA partners with many reputable zoos that provide important services like animal research, animal sanctuary and species preservation. An [example includes the transfer of two endangered Orinoco crocodiles](#) to a zoo in the United States where a breeding program to repopulate the species now exists.

Our concern with zoos that exist solely for commercial gain is that this business model is outdated and not in the best interest of the animals. It is an important step for Animal Welfare in the Province of Ontario that these types of facilities be prohibited under law.

What is the role of the Ontario SPCA when animal cruelty is reported?

The Ontario SPCA is a registered charity and our first role is to protect animals and provide for Animal Welfare. In addition to our role as a charity, the Government of Ontario contracts the organization to enforce provincial Animal Welfare legislation.

Ontario SPCA officers are Peace Officers and have the same jurisdiction as the police when it comes to enforcing Animal Welfare legislation. The Society responds to, on average, 17,000 cruelty complaints each year.

How will the public be informed regarding the concerns at the Papanack Zoo?

The Ontario SPCA has opened an investigation into allegations of animal cruelty at the Papanack Zoo. We understand that there is heightened public interest in this case. We commit to making public as much information as possible, being careful to preserve the integrity of the investigation.

Why can zoos still operate even when they have been charged and why doesn't the Ontario SPCA shut down the zoos and remove the animals when they are investigating?

The provincial Animal Welfare legislation does not grant the Ontario SPCA jurisdiction over the operations of zoos, aquariums or animals used for public entertainment. What it does cover is the standards of care the animals receive that are involved in these facilities. As a result, the Ontario SPCA does not have the authority to shut down any facility; we can only address the care of the animals. If charges are laid and a conviction is received, a Justice of the Peace or Judge has the authority to address if those convicted are allowed to own or care for animals.

Why is the Ontario SPCA speaking out now against facilities using animals for commercial gain?

The Ontario SPCA has always encouraged enhanced oversight when it comes to exotic animals, such as the ones found in zoos. We want to continue this conversation and encourage the public to speak to their MP or MPP about this topic.

The Ontario Government gives the Ontario SPCA \$5.5 million per year. How are those funds used?

The Ontario Government provides funding for the enforcement of its provincial animal welfare legislation. The Ontario Government contracts the Ontario SPCA to maintain and enforce its animal welfare legislation province-wide and provides \$5.5 million, approximately 1/3 of the actual cost, per year to fund the contract. Under contract to the Ontario Government, the Ontario SPCA is directed to use \$3.2 million to support front line animal protection work being done at the community level. The balance of the funds, \$2.3 million, are used to support a number of programs including the 310-SPCA hotline, the provincial zoo registry, Officer training, major case management, service to the North and Indigenous programs. By comparison, the City of Toronto provides \$11 million per year to the organization that provides animal control services in Metro.