NORTH AMERICAN
NAPSA
PRIMATE SANCTUARY ALLIANCE

September 4, 2018

Jeff Bezos
Chief Executive Officer
Amazon
Via email: jeff@amazon.com

Dear Mr. Bezos,

I write to you regarding an Internet commercial for Amazon that featured a long tailed macaque in bed with a human child. A screenshot from the commercial is attached. The disturbing messages inherent in this video have lasting harms, not just for this specific monkey, but for conservation in general. Relying on this archaic form of "entertainment" is harmful because it directly promotes unethical treatment of primates and their use in the pet trade.

The entire lifetime of a primate is negatively affected when they are used in entertainment and the pet trade. As infants, they are removed from their mothers at a very early age – *years* before they would naturally separate. This denies them virtually all of the experiences they need to be healthy, including social housing, social grooming, and exercise. As a result of this deficit, monkeys develop aberrant and harmful behaviors, such as obsessive compulsions, self-mutilation, and aggression. Monkeys belong in the wild, and if that's not possible, in the care of trained experts at a nonprofit primate sanctuary.

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is a coalition of ten of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our sanctuaries, we care for over 730 primates, many of whom were formerly used in entertainment. NAPSA members are contacted constantly by people who – perhaps because they saw cute monkeys in the media – purchased a baby monkey and then lived to regret it. Sanctuaries are overwhelmed with requests to house "pet" primates, so we are dedicated to convincing the media that episodes and films that use live primates bring about much more harm than good. So that you may learn more about performing primates and the use of primates in the pet trade, our advocacy position statements on these topics are attached.

Large corporations like Pfizer have responded favorably to outcry in response to ads showcasing performing apes, and have pledged to no longer engage in this practice. Innovative CGI replacements are proven to gain companies positive media attention in a more animal-friendly way. The top ten advertising agencies in the U.S. have all pledged not to use apes in their campaigns, with some foreswearing the usage of nonhuman primates altogether. This is the prevailing culture of large corporations and the media. In order to advertise responsibly, Amazon must do the same.

Sincerely,

Erika Fleury

Erika Fleury
Program Director

AT&T 1:06 PM

Comments

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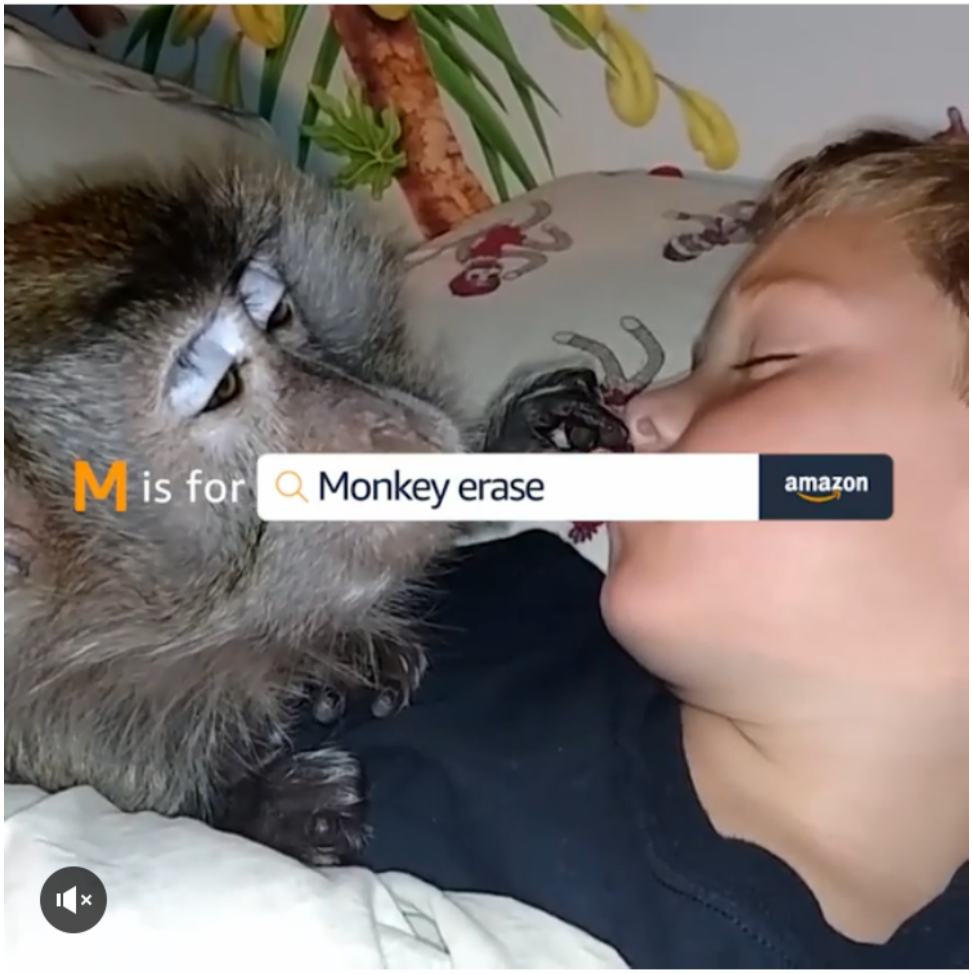

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Advocacy Position Statement
Performing Primates

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is opposed to the use of trained primates for entertainment. As experts in the field of primate care, we respectfully ask the public not to support public events featuring trained monkeys and apes.

While such performances may seem amusing on the surface, the primates used in these spectacles are poorly treated. Although the records of many animal rental operators are generally less than stellar, and training and housing conditions can be incredibly stressful (and often abusive), the simple fact that primates are forced to dress up and perform on cue in a terribly unnatural situation is reason enough to avoid such events.

The entire lifetime of a primate is negatively affected when they are exploited for entertainment. As infants, they are removed from their mothers at a very early age – years before they would naturally separate. They are trained using methods that intimidate and inhibit their innate behaviors. Even then, the intelligence and unpredictable nature of these wild animals means that they often can only be used for a short time as actors before they become too independent, unmanageable, and dangerous. Primates are then deemed useless to the entertainment industry, and sold into situations that range from uncomfortable to downright harmful. The lucky ones are able to spend the remaining years of their life in a primate sanctuary.

NAPSA is a coalition of nine of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our member sanctuaries, we care for over 730 primates, many of whom were formerly used in entertainment. We see how primates are forever damaged by the work forced upon them, and we look forward to the day when such archaic practices are no longer permitted.

For more information:
"The Use of Primate "Actors" in Feature Films 1990–2013," Brooke Catherine Aldrich
"Apes in Media and Commercial Performances," Association of Zoos & Aquariums
"Bengals Shocking Half-Time 'Cowboy Monkey' Has a Cruel History," The Dodo
"Chimpanzees in Entertainment," ChimpCARE
"Apes in Entertainment," Jane Goodall Institute Australia
"Opposition to the Use of Nonhuman Primates in the Media," International Primatological Society
"Atypical Experiences of Captive Chimpanzees (Pan Troglodytes) Are Associated with Higher Hair Cortisol Concentrations as Adults," S.L. Jacobson et al.
"Impact of Visual Context on Public Perceptions of Non-Human Primate Performers," K. A. Leighty et al.

Advocacy Position Statement

Private Ownership of Primates

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is opposed to the private ownership of primates.

Unlike dogs and cats, apes and monkeys are not domesticated animals. Non-human primates are extremely social animals whose normal development requires the company of others of their own kind. Ideally, primates should live in the wild. Their natural habitats include species-typical social groups that allow them to learn from their families and have a rich emotional life. In reality, however, there is an active industry that breeds primates to sell as pets in human homes.

As infants, primates in the pet trade are removed from their mothers years before they would naturally separate, which causes psychological suffering that manifests throughout their entire life. Teeth are often removed for ease of handling, which can limit the foods they can eat. Qualified veterinary care for pet primates can be difficult, if not impossible, to find.

Primates are inquisitive animals whose proper care requires daily mental stimulation and extensive physical activity, which is often impossible for the average household to provide. Primates kept in human homes are rarely, if ever, monitored by animal welfare officials, which means they are often kept in unsuitable living conditions resulting in neglect, mistreatment, and myriad psychological and physical ailments that can lead to death. There are a range of zoonotic diseases that are transmitted by primates and can be harmful, even fatal, to humans.

Once primates reach adolescence, which can be just a few years into a 40+ year lifespan, they inevitably become too unmanageable to handle. Primates can and will bite. They have strong jaws and sharp teeth, and bites can result in significant and potentially fatal injuries to humans. Realizing that living with an adult primate is not sustainable, owners often seek to surrender their pets or are forced to surrender them due to a threat to public safety.

Many primates that were privately owned end up living in roadside zoos, recycled as breeders to produce the next generation of ill-fated pets, or in other abusive situations. In the best cases, former pets may end up in a NAPSA member sanctuary, where they live their remaining years in an enriched environment more typical to their species. Even in sanctuary, former pets often struggle with learning how to socialize with other primates and many exhibit abnormal behaviors for the rest of their lives.

The private ownership of primates is never in the best interest of the animal or the owner.

For more information:

"Legislative Recommendations to Prohibit the Possession, Sale, Breeding, Import, or Transfer of Dangerous Wild Animals," American Bar Association
"White Paper: Personal Possession of Non-Human Primates," Association of Zoos and Aquariums
"The Phenomenon of Monkeys as 'Surrogate Children'," Linda J. Howard
"Private Ownership of Nonhuman Primates," International Primatological Society
"Atypical Experiences of Captive Chimpanzees (Pan Troglodytes) Are Associated with Higher Hair Cortisol Concentrations as Adults," S.L. Jacobson, H.D. Freeman, R.M. Santymire, S.R. Ross
"My Child is a Monkey," and "The Perils of Keeping Monkeys as Pets," National Geographic
"The Science Behind Why Chimps Are Not Pets," PBS
"Significant Zoonotic Disease of Non-Human Primates," Walter Reed Army Institute