



August 5, 2019

Charles Lachman, Executive Producer
Inside Edition
Sent via social media

Dear Mr. Lachman,

A July 12, 2019 Inside Edition The Breakdown [episode](#) featured the “pet” monkey of Jay Kennedy, a bodybuilder and popular social media influencer. Three-month old vervet Curtis is shown modeling a variety of outfits, diapers and leashes, being bathed, eating, and perching on Kennedy’s shoulders in public areas. Kennedy seems to live in Las Vegas, where private ownership of monkeys is illegal. His monkey will likely end up confiscated by officials or relinquished when Kennedy realizes how difficult it is to meet the complex needs of an older vervet. *Everything* shown in this video is harmful, both for monkeys in general and for young Curtis in particular.

Primates can develop skin ailments and bone deformities from wearing clothing. Curtiss is fed a highly unnatural and unhealthy diet (including cotton candy) despite the high occurrence of diabetes in captive primates. Bringing him out into public spaces is frightening to a monkey, and it puts him and the general public in danger due to the ease of disease transfer between humans and other primate species. Curtis is still very young (so young, in fact, that we question why he was not given the chance to be raised by his mother! In the wild, he would live with his mother for years.) This monkey will live for decades. In just a few short years, he will inevitably become too difficult to handle, which is why most monkey owners eventually relinquish their animals. Attacks and injuries are common - just look up “pet monkey bites” to see the harm monkeys are capable of inflicting. I can assure you, footage of the truth about Jay Kennedy’s “pet” would not be heartwarming.

Viewers of your content will receive the message that it’s easy, fun, and normal to have a monkey as a pet. This impression could not be further from reality. The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is a coalition of eight of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our sanctuaries, we care for close to 800 primates, many of whom were formerly privately owned as ill-considered “pets.”

Inside Edition has the power to reach many people with your content; We hope you will reconsider the message you spread with your articles. Please commit to no longer promote exotic animal ownership, and consider a report on the lifesaving work of accredited primate sanctuaries. We will show you where “pets” like Curtis ultimately end up.

Sincerely,

Erika Fleury
Program Director

NAPSA is a fiscally sponsored project of Community Initiatives, an Oakland-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
1000 Broadway • Suite 480 • Oakland, CA 94607

Visit our website at www.PrimateSanctuaries.org



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