



September 6, 2019
WVLT 8
Sent via social media

Dear WVLT 8,

An August 2nd article "[Tennessee Woman's Pet Monkeys Show Off Vol Spirit](#)" promoted inaccurate and harmful information regarding "pet" primates by promoting monkeys owned by Jamie Fuller.

The accompanying photo of an 8-week old squirrel monkey wearing an orange dress was particularly upsetting. It showed is a very young monkey, who would normally be raised by his or her mother for years instead of being separated for sale as a "pet" a few weeks after birth and then forced into clothing for photo opportunities. Though the state of Tennessee does not yet ban the private ownership of primates, most other states do, and for good reason: Monkeys can never be domesticated. In just a few short years, he or she 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, photos revealing the [truth about "pet" monkeys](#) would not be so cute.

If you want to write about monkeys, you can explore the skin ailments and bone deformities that come from forcing them to wear clothes and diapers. Discuss the diseases like diabetes and cardiac problems that arise from the diets they are fed as pets (very often their teeth are removed so they can't hurt others when they bite, which limits their diets even further.) Depressions, obsessive compulsions, and self-harming arise when primates are torn from their mothers years before they would naturally separate. All of this is done in the pet trade, and your article encouraged this.

Readers of this article will receive the message that it's fun to own a monkey. 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."

Please commit to no longer promote exotic animal ownership, and consider a report on the lifesaving work of accredited primate sanctuaries. We invite you to visit an accredited NAPSA member primate sanctuary so you can learn the truth about captive primates. We will show you where "pets" like Jamie Fuller's ultimately end up.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Erika Fleury'.

Erika Fleury
Program Director

NAPSA is a fiscally sponsored project of Community Initiatives, an Oakland-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
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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