



May 24, 2018

Scott Jagow, Editor-in-Chief

Natalie Voss

Paulick Report

*via email: [scott@paulickreport.com](mailto:scott@paulickreport.com) and [natalie@paulickreport.com](mailto:natalie@paulickreport.com)*

Dear Mr. Jagow and Ms. Voss,

We write to you in response to your March 13<sup>th</sup> article "[Barn Buddies Presented by Doc's Product, Inc.: Gemma is a Monkey About Town.](#)" As experts in the field of primate care, we are concerned that this article is misleading and sends a highly unethical message to your readers.

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 privately owned and living in human homes. We are contacted daily by people who purchased a baby monkey (from someone like the trainer you featured, Terri Pompay) and then lived to regret it. Monkeys quickly grow to be strong, cunning and difficult to manage. They can transfer disease and destroy homes. They can bite and injure their owners, including children. It is simply not possible to fulfill the unique needs of a monkey within a private home, and your article's claim that Ms. Pompay's leashed, clothed spider monkey Gemma is "busy and happy" is blatantly false. Once people realize the expense and dedication required to care for a monkey, many attempt to place their monkeys at a sanctuary, but it can be problematic to find an accredited sanctuary that has space to take "pet" monkeys. Most primate sanctuaries have lengthy waiting lists.

Attached is NAPSA's Position Statement on the private ownership of primates so you may learn why the private ownership of primates is so harmful.

Please reconsider promoting such irresponsible treatment of exotic animals within your publication. Even Ms. Pompay seems to admit the error of ways, as she is quoted saying that her breeding of monkeys started out as "just a hobby but it kind of went crazy." We agree, and wish that Ms. Pompay would consider the decades of life and care her hobbies require once they leave her leash.

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, CA-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.  
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Visit our website at [www.PrimateSanctuaries.org](http://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