

August 18, 2023

Office of the Attorney General
100 N. Carson Street
Carson City, NV. 89701
aginquiries@ag.nv.gov

Re: Complaint regarding fraudulent fundraising practices

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to bring to your attention to a letter I received asking for a charitable donation for Lion Habitat Ranch in Henderson, Nevada, a non-profit organization. Based on the contents of the letter, I believe this organization is engaged in fraudulent fundraising practices by making provably false statements for the purpose of raising money. (I have never visited this place or asked to be put on a mailing list.) I am asking that your office investigate this complaint.

I did some research and found that statements made in the letter are absolutely false:

- 1. The letter repeatedly asks people to sign and return a “Save Lions from Caged Hunting” petition to shut down hunting ranches in this country.**
There are no hunting ranches with lions to shut down. In 2015 the U.S. government recognized lions as a threatened species protected under the Endangered Species Act, so lions cannot be legally hunted in this country. Anyone who cares for lions would know that.
- 2. The author of the letter, Keith Evans, says he will send the petitions to the Secretary of Agriculture to shut down the hunting ranches.**
Again, hunting ranches with lions do not exist in the U.S.
- 3. The letter says there are “perhaps hundreds [of hunting ranches] in the country” that allow people to shoot lions.**
Again, this is false. Lions are a threatened species protected under the Endangered Species Act so they cannot be legally hunted.

The following statements are perhaps suggestive in nature, but still provably false:

- 1. In the letter Evans says he founded his facility to “give these innocent big cats a forever home where they would be safe and loved.”**
According to the Las Vegas Review-Journal (“Lion Habitat Ranch in Danger of Shut Down”, March 4, 2015, <https://tinyurl.com/3axmd8yf>), Evans established his facility as an “exotic animal compound” in 1999 when he was displaying lions at the MGM Grand. He drove the lions to MGM and back each day until MGM closed the lion display in 2012. Lion Habitat Ranch did not become a nonprofit organization until 2014.

Over the years Evans bred his lions, increasing their numbers. In 2015, Clark County considered shutting down Lion Habitat Ranch – which had 46 lions at the time – due to zoning violations and safety concerns. He had also been cited for “the addition of different species of animals to the

facility,” including a giraffe, emus, ostriches and fowl that were not on his permit. It is my understanding that he later agreed to stop breeding lions to reduce their numbers.

2. The letter states that Lion Habitat Ranch is supported by the “small fee” he charges visitors but “it hasn’t been enough in the past few years to make ends meet.”

A quick look at the Lion Habitat Ranch website shows that in addition to the general admission fee (\$18-25/person), they offer “experiences” that cost \$100-150 for a behind-the-scenes tour, you can “sponsor” a lion for \$8,000-10,000 a year, feed a lion for \$100/pound of food per person, and a giraffe painting experience for \$100. These do not constitute a “small fee.”

Furthermore, if Lion Habitat Ranch is unable to make ends meet, this calls for an investigation by the proper authorities into the welfare of the lions and other animals kept there.

3. The letter suggests that Lion Habitat Ranch may be unable to feed its lions and would possibly need to euthanize them. (“It scares me deeply to think what might happen if I can’t afford to feed them. It’s possible they would be euthanized because they simply have nowhere else to go.”)

The Lion Habitat Ranch website says nothing about this. It states that the facility depends on public support “to keep our organization at the fore front (sic) of high quality animal care.” And that public support “allows us to meet the continuing demands of new rules and regulations regarding equipment and safety measure for animals and guests alike...” (See <https://lionhabitatranch.org/help/donate/>) The website says nothing about being unable to or needing donations just to feed the animals.

Again, if Lion Habitat Ranch is desperate to feed its animals this calls for an investigation into the welfare of the lions and other animals kept there. If it is necessary to move the lions, there are accredited sanctuaries available to take them in.

I fully understand that fundraising letters are meant to elicit an emotional reaction and prompt donations, but a non-profit organization should not be allowed to send letters with outright lies. That is nothing but a scam.

As Lion Habitat Ranch is a 501(c)(3) organization, I am asking that you investigate them for engaging in fraudulent fundraising practices.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I am attaching a copy of the letter I received.

Sincerely,

Annoula Wylderich

cc: Michael Naft, Clark County Board of Commissioners, DistrictA@ClarkCountyNV.gov