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Abstract: Six cheetahs from the De Wildt Cheetah Research and Breeding Centre, one of South Africa's most reputable breeding centers of endangered species, were exported this week to a safari park in China that has been universally condemned by animal welfare organizations.

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Return-path: <owner-wildcats@d0-154-055-00-102.dsl.execpc.com>
Envelope-to: pjackson@iprolink.ch
Delivery-date: Fri, 10 Dec 1999 04:15:10 +0100
To: wildcats@catbox.com
Date: Thu, 09 Dec 1999 19:12:08 -0800
From: "Z Brubruff" <brbrf@chickmail.com>
X-Sent-Mail: off
Subject: WILD: S.Africa:Cheetahs exported to Chinese horror park -article
X-Sender-Ip: 209.102.41.180
Organization: ChickMail (<http://www.chickmail.com:80>)
Content-Language: en
Sender: owner-wildcats@catbox.com
Reply-To: wildcats@catbox.com

http://www.africanews.org/south/southafrica/stories/19991210/19991210_feat11.html

Cheetahs exported to Chinese horror park

The Mail & Guardian (Johannesburg)
December 10, 1999
By Fiona Macleod

Johannesburg - Six cheetahs from the De Wildt Cheetah Research and Breeding Centre, one of South Africa's most reputable breeding centres of endangered species, were exported this week to a safari park in China that has been universally condemned by animal welfare organisations.

John Wedderburn, of the Asian Animal Protection Network, describes a recent visit to the Xili Lake Safari Park in Southern China: "The elephants have a large paddock but are kept chained in a corner and are made to do demeaning tricks.

"When we approached the hippopotamus pool, the keepers beat the animals with bamboo poles to force them out of the water so we could see them better.

"There are regular performance shows in a big arena, but the worst feature is the photography area: a drugged, de-clawed, de-toothed tiger is struck on the mouth to make him snarl while the client sits beside him looking triumphant; a bear is made to stand up and snarl by the owner pulling a string that goes over a pulley and down to a ring in his upper lip; a terrified deer is held down while children sit on it."

Live domestic animals are fed to tigers, under the pretence that this keeps them wild. But the welfare organisations say they are never returned to the wild, and even if they were they would be shot because they have developed a taste for livestock.

Wedderburn says at least six major international animal welfare organisations have visited the park in recent years and condemned it.

They called for a boycott of the park by tourists and travel agents in 1997 after newspaper reports about ill-treatment of its animals.

De Wildt sold the six young cheetahs to Pretoria wildlife trader Mike Bester about a month ago, and they were shipped out last Friday.

De Wildt's director, Anne van Dijk, says they fetched a price of about \$4 500 each.

Cheetahs are listed as highly endangered, but when they are bred in captivity the normal regulations that apply to endangered species are relaxed.

South African animal welfare organisations expressed concern this week at the involvement of a reputable centre like De Wildt in the growing weekly shipments of wildlife from this country to China.

They point out that although China recently signed the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, it has no animal welfare laws like those in South Africa.

Van Dijk says she was aware the cheetahs were going to the Xili Lake park, but she knew nothing about its notoriety before they were sent there.

"I'm seriously considering going over to check things out in China. If I don't like what's happening to my cheetahs, maybe I'll bring them back."