

Canned hunts target zoo animals

WASHINGTON (AP) — Some of those furry creatures at America's zoos could end up decorating the dens of people who pay big money to bag trophies at hunting ranches, the Humane Society says.

Farms and ranches offering what critics call "canned hunts" are springing up across the country. For zoos, circuses and animal farms, the ranches can provide a convenient and often profitable way to dispose of surplus animals.

For hunters with the cash — price lists quote \$350 for a pygmy goat and up to \$20,000 for a rhinoceros, the society says — it's a quick and easy way to claim an exotic ornament.

It is illegal to bag a rhinoceros in this country, and the group says it does not have evidence that rhinos or other endangered animals have been killed in canned hunts.

But hunters armed with bows, high-powered rifles and pistols pursue other prey, sometimes in areas as large as hundreds of acres but other times in

enclosures as small as 25 square feet. It's virtually impossible for the animals to escape, and most operators guarantee a kill.

"Once the animal's head is on a wall, the hunter can make up some story about traveling to Africa or Asia," said Humane Society spokesman Wayne Pacelle.

Officials of the controlled-hunt industry voice outrage at "caged kills," but they defend hunts of exotic breeds on large, open ranches.

"We're a conservation organization that recognizes that ethical hunting, fair-chase hunting, is an appropriate management tool," said Harvey Hilderbran, head of Exotic Wildlife Association, a Texas-based trade group. The association has some 400 members, about half of whom are involved in this type of canned hunting.

Michael Winikoff, a Humane Society lawyer and investigator, said hunt outfitters rely largely on breeders for their game but sometimes buy exotic animals born at roadside attractions and large zoos.

According to the society, animals from zoos all across the country, from California's prestigious San Diego Zoo to Washington's National Zoo, have gone to hunting farms.

"The public is interested in seeing cute little animals. Animals don't remain cute and little very long," said Patrick Martin, a New York state biologist who has followed animal trades. "The zoos trade animals; they try to keep the exhibits fresh, but there is always a surplus."

For years, according to the Humane Society, Busch Gardens in Tampa Bay, Fla., has sold gazelles, impalas, zebras and other animals to people involved in hunting.

Officially, the zoo abhors the practice of canned hunts. But Busch Gardens executive Gerald Lentz acknowledged that some of its animals may have ended up on Texas hunting ranches. He said that the zoo was investigating.

The San Diego Zoo said that several years ago it sold a couple of Dybowski's Sika deer to the

operator of a hunting ranch. The animals, said zoo spokesman Jeff Jouett, were recovered unharmed several months later after an animal-rights group protested the sale.

A spokesman for the National Zoo said some of its animals had ended up on a hunting ranch in the early '90s but were part of a breeding herd, and the rancher assured the zoo they would not be hunted.

"Current policy is never to send animals to those places," said spokesman Bob Hoage.

The zoo industry's sanctioning body, the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, encourages its member zoos to control breeding and promotes euthanasia as a final option.

The association said it deplores canned hunts and called the Humane Society's claims "careless, irresponsible and defamatory." It refused to release a "letter of reprimand" issued to the San Diego Zoo in 1992 for its dealings in the hunting trade.

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Five percent of pregnant women use drugs

WASHINGTON (AP) — More than 5 percent of the 4 million American women who had babies in 1992 used illegal drugs while pregnant, a government survey reports.

One fifth of the mothers-to-be smoked cigarettes or drank alcohol during pregnancy, according to a survey conducted for the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Women who smoked and drank were more likely to also have used drugs, according to the \$3 million National Pregnancy and Health Survey.

Alan I. Leshner, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, said Monday the correlation between abuse of legal and illegal

drugs "has tremendous public health implications and reinforces the need for health practitioners to continually monitor the status of smoking, drinking and ... drug use during pregnancy."

Overall the survey indicated that 820,000 women, or 20 percent, smoked cigarettes during pregnancy, and 757,000, or 19 percent, used alcohol.

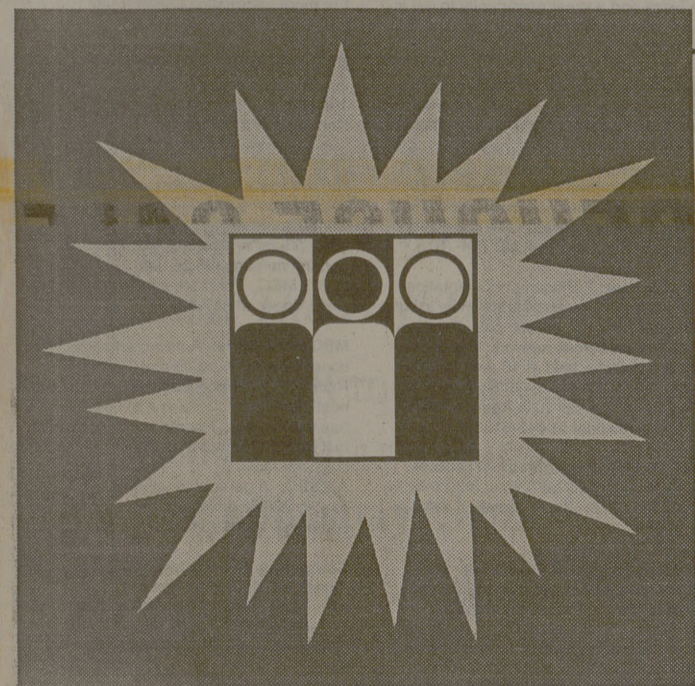
Leshner said, "There was a strong link between cigarette smoking and alcohol use and the use of illicit drugs." Only six percent of those who never used drugs were smokers or drinkers, while 32 percent of those who used at least one drug either

smoked or drank.

The women curtailed their use of drugs from three months prior to becoming pregnant until they gave birth, but generally did not go cold turkey.





That shows "how gripping an illness drug addiction can be, even in the face of what may seem to many to be the ultimate incentive to stay drug-free," Leshner said.

The report was based on 2,613 women who delivered babies at 52 hospitals across the country. These women were surveyed by Westat, Inc., between October 1992 and August 1993.



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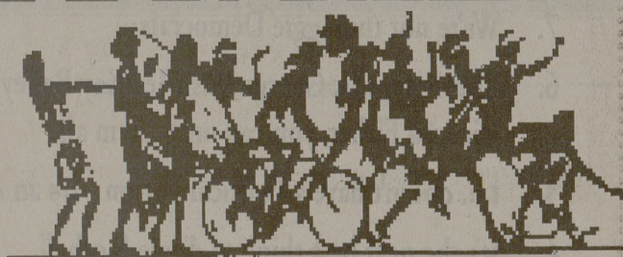
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