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RE: Honorary letter from Tanya Tucker

To Whom it May Concern:

Recently, I witnessed the shocking and inhumane treatment of animals, including endangered species, at the Special Memories Zoo in Greenville, Wisconsin. I am writing this letter to alert local media, families, schools and anyone who may consider a visit to the Special Memories Zoo. Most importantly, I am asking for help to protect the zoo's precious animals. It genuinely felt like we were walking through an animal hospice.

Then the reptile room was so filthy, and the stench was so overwhelming, it took our breath away. Plus, I did not see water in any of the animals' cages.

Somebody has to **take action**, and I do not want to wait around while more abuse takes place.

As you might already know, I am a music artist and not an animal expert. But I do enjoy going to see animals, and I thought it would be a nice experience to go to the zoo with my children and members of my band while on a day off.

I am very glad I did, because that visit alerted me to the extremely poor conditions in which this zoo's animals are kept — truly horrific, and impossible not to see and notice. The treatment of the animals was nothing close to humane. Both in terms of their environment and their health, the animals seemed neglected to the point of abuse.

I was excited to see "Tanya," an endangered Bengal tiger who I was told was named after me. But it appeared Tanya's leg was broken. When I raised this concern with the zookeeper, her response was, "Oh she's just faking it." This did not seem like a reasonable or truthful response, or explanation. Animals don't just "fake it."

"Tanya," the tiger, wasn't the only animal whose condition surprised and alarmed me. The pitiful Siberian bears were sitting in and surrounded by mounds of their own feces. In addition, the lions — also endangered species — were confined in a very small cage. There was some food in the cage, that zoo staff told me was raw meat — but it did not look like meat, and the lions did not touch it the entire time I was there.

The jaguar was so clearly frightened and was foaming at the mouth. The 5-year-old giraffe was confined to such a small space and was pacing constantly. This giraffe also appeared to have massive tumors right behind his front legs.

The bird room had several birds with what appeared to be broken wings. When asked about them, the zookeeper told me she couldn't do anything for them and was not concerned in the least. The birds were just lying on the cage floor and to me it looked like they were dying slowly.

I am also concerned that the zoo is not sufficiently staffed. We met the zoo's two owners and one zookeeper, but they were not attending to the animals. In fact, my entire time at Special Memories we never saw one person or caregiver with any of the animals. Plus, three people cannot take care of that many wild animals.

The zoo has moral and legal obligations to the animals who are confined and put on display but did not seem to care at all about these animals' well-being.

I play a lot of concerts in Wisconsin. I love its warm friendly people — and I believe if they knew what was going on, they wouldn't tolerate it. I know what I saw, and I know it needs changing.

This situation has opened my eyes to the need for stronger laws to ensure captive and wild animals are properly cared for. We need better oversight of those who keep wild animals captive. We need more scrutiny over who is permitted to "own" wild animals.

I am now urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to investigate the conditions at the Special Memories Zoo — and **take action** to ensure the animals get the diet and veterinary care they require. Join me in contacting the USDA by visiting www.aldf.org/HelpTanya.

This is where I'm starting, but it won't be where I stop. I am a singer. I am just one voice. I am using that voice to speak up for these animals.

If the animals can't be cared for properly, they should be left where they belong in the wild or with people that have the knowledge and means to properly care for them — so our children can gain knowledge from their visit and not sadness.

Very concerned and heartbroken,



Tanya Tucker
Nashville, Tennessee

