

Thursday February 4, 2010

Captive big cats not a public safety issue

I WOULD like to correct a few inaccuracies in the letter "Dangerous flirtation with tiger" (*The Star* , Feb 3).

It appears the writer has strong emotional feelings on the issue but no hands-on experience and lacks the knowledge of certain facts.

He claims that pet tigers have caused several fatalities and macabre maulings in the US in recent years.

Between 1990 and 2009, 20 people died in the US as a result of exotic/wild cat attack and only two of them from pet tigers held in non-commercial facilities. That averages to 1.05 human deaths per year. You have a better chance of winning the lottery jackpot than being killed by a captive large cat.

None of these deaths were caused by exotic cats being unsupervised off the private owners' or zoo's property. Instead, all victims were voluntarily on the property where the animal was kept, be it the owners, handlers, employees, friends or visitors wanting to see the animals.

The only person killed in public was a circus trainer in Pennsylvania in 1997 while he was doing his job and the tiger was caged.

Since 1990, there is no record of a member of the public in the US dying as a result of a captive big cat at large, meaning, unsupervised and off the property where the animals were kept.

Big cats out of the cage, but still on owners'/zoo property, is not considered at large for our

statistical analysis. Captive big cats might be an occupational hazard, but it is not a public safety issue.

The letter states "In the US there is a law, the Captive Wildlife Safety Act, passed in 2004, which prohibits the availability of wild cats to the pet trade." That is incorrect. This law amends the Lacey Act to make it illegal to import, export, buy, sell, transport, receive or acquire live big cats (cougars and up) across State lines or the US border. The Act provides exemptions for certain individuals and entities. This act doesn't ban private ownership of big cats, just certain types of transport across state and US borders.

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Wednesday February 3, 2010

Dangerous flirtation with tigers

It was shocking to see a tiger handler taking a tiger for his afternoon walk nonchalantly at a resort as published in *The Star* on Feb 1. I wonder if such a stunt is legal in our country.

Big jungle cats such as tigers are awe-inspiring, magnificent animals which undoubtedly attract great public attention.

It appears the handler is assuming the role of pet-keeper of the tiger but is it wise to keep wild cats as pets? There is no way that these wild cats will measure up to the characteristics of domestic animals. They are poles apart in temperament and predictability.

It has been well-documented that pet tigers have resulted in several fatalities and macabre maulings in the US in recent years.

These cats are used to the abandon freedom of the wild and will not tolerate being chained and led by the hand.

Wild cats such as tigers and lions are ever so problematic. On the surface they may appear docile but that is a deep deception.

Their natural tendencies must never be glossed over. Tigers are of great strength and together with the size of their sharp teeth and claws, they are a real and present danger.

We must never forget that they are ruthless predators always looking for some flesh to dig their teeth into.

This dangerous flirtation with the wild should be stopped immediately in public interest.

In the US there is a law, The Captive Wildlife Safety Act, passed in 2004, which prohibits the availability of wild cats to the pet trade.

As a publicity stunt it might work wonders but the risks involved don't make it worthwhile.

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Seremban.

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