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Little progress in wolf poisonings

By: Bob Bethell 11/09/2006

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PALS — Lori Ensign says no one should fear the wolves now sheltered at her interactive zoo, Safari's.

Sasha is still sick.

The beautiful gray wolf seldom emerges from his den at Safari's Sanctuary, 26881 E. 58th St.

But he is a survivor.

The same can't be said of Lobo and Raven, who - unlike Sasha - succumbed last month to poisoned meat tossed in their compound by an unknown two-legged suspect.

Wagoner County sheriff's deputies are investigating the crime, but so far have little to show, said Safari's owner Lori Ensign.

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More than 200 animals call the interactive Wagoner County zoo home.

A \$750 reward for information about the poisonings has increased to \$1,200 because "volunteers, veterinarians and others who care want this guy," Ensign said.

At USDA urging, Safari's is no longer accepting donated meat, and that is creating a severe financial hardship this time of year.

"We simply can't trust that someone won't bring us poisoned meat. It is sick and crazy," said Ensign.

"Now we can accept meat only from people we know."

"For years, we asked animal lovers to clean out their refrigerators and freezers and bring us the leftovers.

"A lot of hunters would give us previous seasons' kills still solidly frozen."

Those stocks -
totalling some
5,000 pounds each
month - fed Safari's
carnivores.

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"Folks would also
bring us produce for
the primates, so
that source is gone,
too.

"Now the meat
costs us more than
\$3,000 and during
the winter the
income isn't there to
pay for it," she said.

"I hate to ask for donations. I'd rather folks just clean out their refrigerators for us. The fact is, we must have 5,000 pounds of meat per month."

The zoo is now under electronic surveillance, and security teams roam the grounds.

"We have folks donating materials and time, but that can't go on forever," Ensign said.

The gentle wolves which perished- most of them donated pets - were like family members to Ensign and her volunteers, she said.

"We're doing everything we can to rehabilitate Sasha, but as you can see, he's still very weak. It is inconceivable that someone would poison these beautiful animals."

Anyone with information about the poisonings should contact the sheriff's

office at 485-3124.

Safari's number is 357-LOVE.

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