



## State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

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June 25, 2024

# NOTICE of VIOLATION

Permit Category: Animal Exhibitor

**SeaQuest Woodbridge, LLC**  
**Dennis Ferriera**  
**250 Woodbridge Center Dr.**  
**Woodbridge, NJ 07095**

An investigation by this Department has revealed that the above-named company and owner(s) have violated a provision of N.J.S.A. 23:2A-1 et. seq. as well as several Exotic and Nongame Wildlife Regulations (N.J.S.A. 7:25-4), permit conditions listed on SeaQuest's Exotic and Nongame Animal Exhibitor and Endangered Species permits, and the corrective actions prescribed in previous letters, as listed below. Two anonymous complainants provided the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, New Jersey Fish & Wildlife (NJFW) with detailed declarations, which included videos and photographs of the violations. Additionally, an expert veterinary witness provided interpretation on some of the limited veterinary records and necropsies SeaQuest submitted to NJFW. Unless otherwise noted below, the following examples of violations are taken from these declarations. This is SeaQuest's official Notice of Violation for the following:

1. **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.7(a)2ii:** "Prior to the issuance of any permit permitted by these regulations, every applicant shall, in forms provided by NJFW, demonstrate that the animal is housed or caged in a manner that prevents disease, liberation or accidental injury to the animal and the public." SeaQuest has repeatedly failed to provide adequate enclosures for the regulated exotic and nongame wildlife in its possession, which has resulted in unnecessary illnesses, injuries, and deaths to these animals.
  - a. The enclosures in SeaQuest's facility are not constructed in a way to prevent the animals from injuring themselves or their conspecifics. In fact, the enclosures were so small or so poorly constructed that they resulted in conspecifics fighting with each other.
    - i. Poor husbandry resulted in the two Asian water monitors to frequently attack each other. According to the declarations provided to NJFW, the two Asian water monitors continued to attack each other and cause each other injuries for at least two years.
      1. August 4, 2021: Three photographs show a female Asian water monitor with bloody wounds on both sides of her face (figure 1), which were reportedly inflicted by the male Asian water monitor. Evidence of aggression between the two animals was documented on this date two more times. SeaQuest management informed

husbandry staff to “keep an eye” on the injuries. This does not replace adequate veterinary care, which is a direct violation of N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.7(a)2, as described below in Violation #2.

2. November 17, 2021: Two photographs show the male Asian water monitor with an area of red skin on its back that appears to be a shed that was not quite ready to come off (figure 2). The piece of skin was reportedly ripped off by another animal in the enclosure.
  3. December 13, 2021: One photograph shows one of the Asian water monitors with burns on the side of its body (figure 3). These burns are indicative of the heat lamp being too close to the animal’s basking spot. This situation was evidently not rectified, as seven more photographs dated January 5, 2022, almost a whole month later, show more burn marks on both the Asian water monitors.
  4. February 18, 2022: One photograph shows blood from the Asian water monitors on their food and water dishes (figure 4), as well as throughout the terrestrial portions of the enclosure (figure 5). No other species from the enclosure were reported to be injured at this time, so it can only be concluded that the two Asian water monitors were aggressive towards one another enough to cause serious injuries that made them bleed all over the enclosure.
  5. From the declarations and minimal veterinary reports provided to NJFW, it can be concluded that little to nothing was done by SeaQuest to prevent further attacks between the two animals. These attacks went on for nearly three years, beginning approximately November 2021 and ending when the male Asian water monitor was euthanized per veterinary recommendation on August 8, 2023. Prior to euthanasia, the male Asian water monitor was taken to the veterinarian on July 23, 2023 for left forearm swelling and lethargy. The veterinarian records reported blood around the mandible, abnormal ambulation of the left forelimb, and scarring on the body. The abnormal swelling and scarring are indicative of aggression from another animal in the enclosure, likely the other Asian water monitor. According to the same veterinary records, the veterinarian recommended that the male Asian water monitor be removed from his regular tank and provided a temporary enclosure that was isolated from other animals. NJFW conducted an inspection after the euthanasia and expressed concern that the male’s euthanasia was a result of fatal injuries inflicted by the female. NJFW requested a copy of the male Asian water monitor’s necropsy, but SeaQuest failed to provide this document. The female Asian water monitor was euthanized per veterinarian recommendation on October 19, 2023.
- ii. Nine giant day geckos were all housed together in a horizontal 20-gallon tank. According to ZooMed.com, no more than five hatchlings should be kept in a 20-gallon enclosure. As adults, these animals should be housed singly, as they can become territorial and fight with one another. Enclosures should also be vertically oriented, not horizontal. Poor husbandry resulted in these giant day geckos to habitually fight with each other and cause serious, life-threatening injuries, which could have been easily prevented if SeaQuest had separated

the animals and provided them with the appropriate enclosures. Photographs of these injuries were documented on at least 11 different dates and a total of 23 pieces of photographic evidence was provided to NJFW.

1. August 19, 2021: Four photographs show injuries induced by aggression among the giant day geckos (figure 6).
2. November 1, 2021: One photograph shows a seriously injured giant day gecko, which was missing skin on the tip of its tail and at least one toe (figure 7).
3. November 10, 2021: One photograph shows a giant day gecko with a severe gash to the side of its body (figure 8).
4. December 3, 2021: One photograph shows a giant day gecko with a gash on the side of its body.
5. January 6, 2022: One photograph shows a giant day gecko with gashes on the side of its body (figure 9).
6. February 22, 2022: Three photographs show a severely injured day gecko. The gashes on the side of its body were so large and deep that its organs could be seen (figure 10).
7. February 28, 2022: Four photographs show a severely injured giant day gecko.
8. March 14, 2022: One photograph shows a severely injured giant day gecko (figure 10).
9. March 16, 2022: One photograph shows a severely injured giant day gecko. One photograph shows a different giant day gecko with an injury to its eye socket. Two additional photographs show injuries to the side of another giant day gecko where its organs are clearly visible (figure 12).
10. March 18, 2022: One photograph shows a severely injured giant day gecko.
11. August 8, 2022: One photograph shows a severely injured giant day gecko.
12. August 12, 2022: Two photographs show a severely injured giant day gecko. Its organs are clearly visible (figure 13).

From the dates of reported injuries listed above, SeaQuest only provided veterinary records for one of the giant day geckos, dated March 29, 2022. This record shows that enrofloxacin, which is used to treat bacterial infections, was prescribed to one of the geckos. According to the photographs provided to NJFW, more than one giant day gecko was injured and would have benefitted from veterinary treatment. Failing to provide veterinary care and the subsequent submittal of the veterinary records to NJFW for the 10 giant day geckos is a violation of N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.7(a)3, which states that “the animal shall receive prompt treatment for any illness or injury from a licensed veterinarian.”

According to SeaQuest's third quarterly report dated September 30, 2022, nine giant day geckos were transferred to NJ Exotic Pets in Lodi, NJ on September 15, 2022. In an email dated January 30, 2024, NJ Exotic Pets confirmed receipt of these animals, stating that these animals were in "terrible shape" and were missing limbs. The fact that SeaQuest housed all giant day geckos in such a small enclosure and allowed this aggressive behavior to continue for nearly a year without intervening or providing proper veterinary care demonstrates that SeaQuest was in violation of NJFW Exotic and Nongame Permit Regulations [N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.7].

- iii. At least one Geyr's uromastyx died without SeaQuest husbandry staff establishing a cause of death. The uromastyx tank was overstocked, which resulted in fighting among the animals. ZooMed.com recommends suggests a 40+ gallon terrarium be provided for an adult uromastyx. Juveniles can be housed in a minimum 30-gallon terrarium. Poor husbandry provided by SeaQuest resulted in fighting with one another. SeaQuest staff reported that the facility originally had four uromastyx after one of them died. Three more were then purchased to add "variety" to the enclosure.
    - 1. May 20, 2022: A screenshot shows a text conversation among SeaQuest husbandry staff regarding their concerns of two male conspecifics. These concerns were never addressed or resolved (figure 14).
    - 2. June 5, 2024: During a routine inspection, one of the uromastyx was kept off-exhibit in one of the back rooms (figure 15). When asked why this animal was off-exhibit, SeaQuest management advised NJFW that it was recommended by their veterinarian due to an old injury. To NJFW's knowledge, no uromastyx was kept off-exhibit per veterinary recommendation before.
  - iv. During the April 5, 2024 inspection, NJFW witnessed an axolotl, classified as an endangered species by the IUCN Red List, in the back room with what appeared to be an infection on one of its hind legs (figure 16). SeaQuest advised NJFW that this animal was being seen by a veterinarian and that pictures and video were sent to the veterinarian. NJFW asked for documentation proving that this animal was being seen by the vet, but the only documentation submitted to NJFW was for its euthanasia.
- b. Minimum husbandry standards were not met for at least five different regulated exotic and nongame species at your facility.
- i. September 12, 2022: The reticulated python's temperature was recorded to be too low for its species. SeaQuest husbandry staff were continually instructed to turn the ball python's heat lamp off because it was causing the enclosure to overheat, resulting in temperatures exceeding 100°F. The overheated enclosure forced the reticulated python to sit in his water dish in an effort to keep himself cool. The hottest temperature reached 110°F and the cooler side of the enclosure reached 90°F. According to ReptiFiles.com, the ideal basking surface temperature should be between 88-92°F and the cooler end should be 76-80°F. Nighttime temperatures ideally should be between 74-78°F. Avonturia.com advises that overheating any reptile can be deadly. Overheating can cause burns, listlessness, exhaustion, lethargy, and little to no appetite.
  - ii. The humidity for the Asian water monitors was consistently too low, according to the readings taken by husbandry staff. On average, the humidity would read 40-60%, which

was about the same as the general areas of the facility. ReptilesMagazine.com, Reptile.Guide, and other reptile websites indicate that Asian water monitors require a humidity range of 60-70%. The enclosure for the Asian water monitors at SeaQuest had no substrate to hold the moisture in. Inadequate humidity levels can lead to health issues such as scale infections, according to ReptilesMagazine.com.

1. Additionally, the two Asian water monitors died as a result of poor husbandry. The male Asian water monitor was euthanized on August 8, 2023, and the female monitor was euthanized on October 19, 2023. According to an expert veterinary witness, both monitors showed signs of gout before euthanasia. The female monitor's necropsy and pathology reports showed kidney disease, which is consistent with gout. SeaQuest did not provide a necropsy for the male Asian water monitor, but it can be assumed that he had the same infections given the fact that they were housed together.
- iii. The Linnaeus's two-toed sloth's humidity also consistently stayed in the range of 40-60%. USDA-APHIS recommends on their website a humidity range of 60-80% for these animals. According to TheSprucePets.com, inadequate temperature and humidity can cause a sloth's digestive system to shut down. ZooAtlanta.org recommends misting the sloth by hand or with an automatic mister to maintain adequate humidity levels. To NJFW's knowledge, SeaQuest staff has never misted the sloth or its enclosure.
- iv. The red-eyed tree frog's humidity consistently read 40-50%. ExoticPetVet.com states that the humidity in the red-eyed tree frog's enclosure should be maintained at 60-80%.
- v. September 25, 2022: Five photographs show a blue tongue skink with damaged toes as a result of stuck shed. Stuck shed, which can result as a result of poor temperature and humidity, can cause infections, which may result in death if left untreated.
- c. Poor husbandry caused infections in at least two different regulated animals. Reptiles.com suggests mouth rot is caused by low humidity, poor misting, and vitamin deficiencies. According to the Dakota Hills Veterinary Clinic, normal mouth bacteria can become dangerous if the animals' immune system is weakened. Over time, this infection can spread to internal organs, like the esophagus and lungs. The evidence of mouth rot in two separate occasions listed below shows that the humidity settings were not set correctly and was an ongoing occurrence for at least 8 months during 2022.
  - i. February 26, 2022: Four photographs show a frilled dragon with mouth rot (figure 17).
  - ii. October 15, 2022: Four photographs show a panther chameleon with mouth rot (figure 18).
- d. At least three regulated exotic and nongame animals escaped as a result of poor enclosure security, one of which was an Asian small-clawed otter, a Potentially Dangerous Species (PDS).
  - i. July 20, 2021, 8:30 pm – 8:50 pm: One of the two Asian small-clawed otters, a PDS, escaped its enclosure (figure 19). This escape was captured on security cameras, which showed a SeaQuest employee entering the back of the room but did not see that the otter had escaped. The otter escaped from its sleep box into the back of the marine room for

about 20 minutes before any of the staff were aware of its escape. SeaQuest staff left the door unlatched, which allowed for the escape. The otter's sleep box was clearly not constructed in a way to prevent escape. At a minimum, a padlock must be put in place of the latch and kept locked at all times. Furthermore, not keeping the sleep box locked allows for the public to open the door during the otter encounter and therefore allows access to the PDS, which is a direct violation of N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.9(a)3.

- ii. October 8, 2021: Giant day geckos escaped their overcrowded enclosure.
  - iii. November 28, 2021: The female prehensile porcupine escaped her enclosure. She was able to pry off the mesh at the top of the enclosure and escape overnight into the aquarium. She was later found sleeping in the rafters above the shark and eel tank.
  - iv. December 22, 2021: Giant day geckos escaped their overcrowded enclosure.
  - v. August 12, 2022: Giant day geckos escaped their overcrowded enclosure.
2. **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.7(a)2i**: "Prior to the issuance of any permit permitted by these regulations, every applicant shall, in forms provided by the Department, demonstrate that the animal is housed or caged in a manner that allows the animal to perform the normal behavior patterns of its species." You have failed to provide adequate enclosure space for the regulated exotic and nongame wildlife in your possession.
- a. During an inspection dated August 24, 2022, NJFW personnel witnessed three adult South American coatimundi being housed in a medium sized dog crate. They were climbing all over each other just to be able to move around the crate. While NJFW understands this was a temporary housing solution while the facility was being deep cleaned after a cockroach infestation, the size of the dog crate did not allow the animals to safely move around and perform their natural behavior patterns. Even off-exhibit animals must be housed in accordance with NJFW regulations.
  - b. During the time that you were in possession of giant day geckos, you housed 15 of them in a 20-gallon tank arranged horizontally. ZooMed.com recommends housing no more than five giant day geckos in a single 20-gallon enclosure, arranged vertically. This overcrowding caused aggressive behavior among the geckos. See violation 1(b)ii.
3. **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.7(a)5**: "The animal is free of infectious diseases and parasites which may be dangerous to the animal, livestock or people of the state, provided that the Division may request certification that the animal for which the permit is being sought is free from infectious diseases and parasites from a licensed New Jersey veterinarian or person recognized as qualified to make such certification by the Director of Fish and Wildlife." SeaQuest failed to ensure that animals entering your facility were free from infectious diseases.
- a. The nine assorted turtle species SeaQuest obtained from the unnamed man in Butler, NJ were infected with shell rot (figure 20), which can be caused by poor husbandry. The mycobacteria that cause shell rot is highly contagious among not just turtles but other species of reptiles, birds, and mammals. The veterinary expert witness confirmed that if not treated quickly, shell rot can spread to the blood stream and becomes life-threatening. Shell rot is indicative of chronically dirty environments.

- i. December 28, 2021: Two photographs show a juvenile Florida softshell turtle with shell rot.
- ii. January 6, 2022: Three photographs show a juvenile Florida softshell turtle with severe shell rot. The first photograph shows the infection on one of the hind feet.
- iii. January 17, 2022: One photograph shows a juvenile softshell turtle with shell rot. A second photograph shows another Florida softshell turtle with shell rot; the back left portion of the shell is broken. A third photograph shows a Florida softshell turtle with severe shell rot; the back portion of the shell is missing. A fourth photograph shows another Florida softshell turtle with shell rot.
- iv. January 20, 2022: One photograph shows a dead juvenile Florida softshell turtle that died as a result of shell rot. The back right portion of the shell is missing and the carapace scutes are clearly flaking off.
- v. January 27, 2022: One photograph shows a juvenile Florida softshell turtle with shell rot.
- vi. February 10, 2022: One photograph shows a western painted turtle with ongoing shell rot. The photo shows white splotches and outlines, as well as scuffs on the turtle's carapace, which is a clear indication of shell rot. The carapace is peeling off.
- vii. September 11, 2022: Three photographs show a Florida softshell turtle with severe shell rot being treated with betadine soaks, as instructed by SeaQuest's veterinarian at the time of infection.
- viii. September 19, 2022: The shell rot from the newly acquired turtles from Butler, NJ was so severe it spread to the other turtles already established in the tank within a year. Two photographs show an adult Florida softshell turtle with severe shell rot (figure 21).
- ix. September 24, 2022: One photograph shows a Florida softshell turtle with shell rot that is being soaked in what appears to be water. Part of the back shell is falling off.
- x. September 25, 2022: Three photographs show an adult Florida softshell turtle with severe shell rot. A closeup photograph shows that there was some bleeding through the shell.
- xi. September 26, 2022: Three photographs show an adult Florida softshell turtle with severe shell rot.

On January 26, 2024, the New Jersey Department of Health Communicable Disease Service reached out to NJFW to advise that the necropsies for the two Florida softshell turtles and one western painted turtle showed evidence that the mycobacteria that causes shell rot, which is caused by poor husbandry and unclean enclosures. This discovery ultimately led to the euthanasia of all aquatic turtles at SeaQuest. According to the declarations, SeaQuest husbandry staff provided the new turtles that came in with shell rot with betadine soaks, as recommended by SeaQuest's veterinarian at the time. Considering that shell rot was evident and bad enough two years later indicates that this poor husbandry was ongoing and not enough was done to prevent the spread of disease and infection.

4. **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.7(a)4**: “The animal shall receive prompt treatment for any illness or injury from a licensed veterinarian.” SeaQuest failed to provide prompt veterinary treatment for at least four illnesses and injuries.
- a. January 8, 2021: One photograph shows a red-and-green macaw that appears healthy. However, in a photograph dated July 4, 2022, the same red-and-green macaw exhibits severe feather plucking (see figure 22). In a letter dated September 28, 2023, NJFW noted an alarming amount of feather plucking. SeaQuest verbally stated during an inspection that took place on September 19, 2023 that the veterinarian was not concerned about the feather plucking. NJFW requested documentation stating this, but SeaQuest failed to provide these documents. NJFW is aware that feather plucking can be normal in captive parrots, but considering the feather plucking grew worse over the years proves that the bird was not receiving the appropriate care and attention in order to lessen the stress on the bird.
  - b. July 13, 2021: Two photographs show a blue tongued skink with bubbling in the eye (figure 23), which is indicative of an infection. While SeaQuest did submit veterinary records for this animal, dated November 22, 2019, May 28, 2020, and November 21, 2023, the last veterinary record showed that the last surviving blue-tongued skink had Ceftazidime administered to treat an infection, but no details describing the infection were provided. The May 28, 2020 veterinary record shows that one of the blue-tongued skinks was treated for a broken jaw, which occurred after a fight with an enclosure mate.
  - c. July 10, 2021: One photograph shows a reticulated python with a growth at the site of an intramuscular injection which was provided by SeaQuest husbandry staff at the recommendation of a veterinarian, who should have been the one to provide such treatment. To this date, SeaQuest has failed to provide any veterinary records for this animal. Additional photographs were provided for this animal:
    - i. August 28, 2021: Four photographs show the injection site, which looked like an open wound (figure 24).
    - ii. September 30, 2021: One photograph shows the reticulated python with its mouth open, which is indicative of a respiratory infection. The anonymous complainant repeatedly informed other husbandry staff and management of the animal’s respiratory infections on the following dates: September 7, 2021, September 11, 2021, September 30, 2021, and January 10, 2022. However, no records were provided to NJFW to show that the animal received adequate veterinary care.
      - 1. Furthermore, the veterinarian witness stated that snakes are susceptible to these infections when immunocompromised as a result of chronic stress. Improper husbandry is one of the factors leading to unnecessary stress, and therefore chronic respiratory infections.
  - d. July 14, 2022: Five photographs show callouses on the feet of three South American coatimundi, which were temporarily held in a dog crate in one of the back rooms. These injuries were evidence of insufficient substrate to protect their feet on the concrete floor in their temporary housing. These coatimundis were also witnessed by NJFW staff in the same crate on August 23, 2022. SeaQuest

failed to provide NJFW veterinary records to show that these animals were treated for these injuries.

5. **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.9(a)3**: “The housing facilities shall also be constructed to prevent public access to and contact with the animal. The potentially dangerous species shall not be kept as a pet, for hobby purposes, or in situations, which, in the judgement of the Department, could adversely affect the health of the animal or which could constitute a hazard to the public.” SeaQuest failed to provide adequate protection to potentially dangerous species from the public and failed to protect the public from potentially dangerous species.
  - a. On two separately documented occasions, the Asian small-clawed otter was housed in a way that constitutes a hazard to the public. The feeding portals were constructed in a way that allowed the otters, a potentially dangerous species, to reach outside or to allow the public to put their hands up to the enclosures to allow for contact. These are both in direct violation of NJFW regulations and have severe consequences, such as seizure of regulated wildlife and/or revocation of permit. Two separate examples, listed below, describe the otters being housed in a way that NJFW classifies as a hazard to both the animals and the public.
    - i. April 3, 2022: A screenshot shows a text message (figure 25) sent from one husbandry staff member to the other husbandry staff and management explaining that the otters pushed out the feeding tubes of their enclosure and that the animals were able to reach out of the holes into the public area. A photograph shows one of the otters biting the anonymous complainant’s jeans. This easily could have been someone’s fingers or skin. These tubes were not fixed for three days, until April 6, 2022. During this time, the otters could easily have reached out and injured the public.
    - ii. June 7, 2023: a Facebook public post shows a guest holding her hand up to the otters’ sleep box and touching the animals through the mesh (figure 26). This took place in the back room of the marine area, where husbandry staff are meant to keep a close watch on the public so that this doesn’t happen on the way to the otter encounter room. Under no circumstances should this have been allowed.
6. “Feeding portals must be monitored at all times by SeaQuest husbandry staff at all times to ensure items other than the allowed food are not put into the animals’ exhibits.”
  - a. December 15, 2023: Husbandry staff documented guests feeding the Asian small-clawed otters with no supervision from SeaQuest husbandry staff.
    - i. During the June 5, 2024 inspection, NJFW staff only witnessed SeaQuest husbandry staff in the general area of the otters for a brief time. The SeaQuest staff member was not in the direct area of the otter feeding portals, which raises to question of whether or not he would have actually seen or caught any unauthorized interactions.
  - b. August 28, 2021: SeaQuest husbandry staff witnessed a guest placing turtle food in the South American coatimundi exhibit. Husbandry staff also witnessed rabbit food being placed in the otters’ exhibit. Husbandry staff did not monitor the feeding portals closely enough or take appropriate action to prevent the public from feeding inappropriate food to the animals.

- c. February 13, 2022: SeaQuest husbandry staff witnessed guests placing rabbit food in the Asian small-clawed otter exhibit again.
7. “Regulated wildlife must be in direct control of the SeaQuest animal handlers. The only permitted contact authorized is restricted to the species indicated on the wildlife inventory list on this permit and must be controlled at all times by the SeaQuest animal handlers. The public may only touch the back of regulated species with two fingers when the animal is in direct control of authorized SeaQuest animal handlers. Regulated wildlife must be held by the head and tail at all times during authorized interactions.” Not only does SeaQuest repeatedly allow unauthorized interactions and hold regulated exotic and nongame wildlife, but SeaQuest also advertises these unauthorized interactions in marketing materials.
- a. March 31, 2023: A public Facebook post shows a SeaQuest animal handler cradling an Asian water monitor in his arms while a member of the public and a child pet it with open hands instead of the authorized two-finger touch (figure 27). The head and tail of the animal are clearly not in direct control of the animal handler.
  - b. May 28, 2023: A public Facebook post shows a mermaid contracted through SeaQuest holding a Russian tortoise. The mermaid is not an official SeaQuest animal handler and is therefore not authorized to interact with regulated wildlife in such a manner.
  - c. February 26, 2023: A public Facebook post shows an Asian water monitor on a leash with an adult member of the public and a child petting the animal with whole hands, instead of the authorized two-finger touch. NJFW never authorized SeaQuest animal handlers to walk regulated wildlife on leashes. The water monitor’s head and tail are clearly not in direct control of the SeaQuest animal handler.
  - d. April 4, 2023: A public Facebook post shows an albino ball python wrapped around the arm of a SeaQuest Animal handler. The head and tail are clearly not in the direct control of the animal handler. There is a child in the photo touching the animal with a full hand, instead of the authorized two-finger touch.
  - e. April 14, 2023: A public Facebook post shows three photos of an Asian water monitor on a leash (figure 28). One photo shows an adult member of the public petting the animal with a full hand and a child reaching for the animal. The water monitor’s head and tail are clearly not in direct control of the SeaQuest animal handler. In two other photos from the same interaction, the assistant general manager can be seen in the background taking photos of these unauthorized interactions.
  - f. January 24, 2024: NJFW took screenshots of SeaQuest website depicting unauthorized interactions, described below:
    - i. An advertisement for the Ultimate Birthday Package contains a photograph of an adult and child with a yellow headed amazon parrot on the child’s arm. This interaction is not authorized. The public is not allowed to hold regulated exotic and nongame wildlife.

- ii. An advertisement on the Activities Page shows a child petting a sloth outside of the animal's enclosure. This interaction is not authorized. The sloth is a potentially dangerous species and may not come in contact with the public at any time for any reason.
    - iii. An advertisement for the EpicQuest shows a photograph of a member of the public holding an African grey parrot and another photograph of a member of the public petting a wallaby. These interactions are not authorized, nor is SeaQuest permitted to possess these animals.
  - g. March 30, 2023: SeaQuest Facebook page states that the public is allowed to hold snakes at the facility. A member of the public asked if they could hold snakes at that location. SeaQuest responded: "Yes! You can hold the snakes in our Woodbridge location! Ask an animal [handler] about this interaction!" The only species of snake at SeaQuest that is not regulated by NJFW is the red-tailed boa (*Boa constrictor constrictor*) and it may be held by the public. All other species of snakes require a permit for possession and may not be held by the public at any time for any reason.
8. **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.7(a)1**: "Prior to the issuance of any permit permitted by these regulations, every applicant shall, in forms provided by the Department, demonstrate that the animal will be fed an adequate diet. Numerous times SeaQuest failed to provide the regulated wildlife an adequate diet.
- a. October 30, 2022: Two photographs show an underweight panther chameleon (figure 29). There was reportedly "a long period of time", starting as early as September 24, 2022, that SeaQuest failed to acquire Dubia roaches, which is a large portion of the panther chameleon's diet. Crickets were instead fed to the chameleon, but this food source reportedly can cause parasites. SeaQuest management failed to approve the staff to obtain the proper diet for the chameleon, which ultimately caused the animal to become malnourished, which is evident from the photographs. The panther chameleon ultimately died December 9, 2023. The necropsy for the panther chameleon showed that the animal was emaciated from being underfed.
  - b. September 7, 2022: A text message was sent from SeaQuest husbandry staff to management stating that in the tanks that had the fish and turtles, the fish were eating the food meant for the turtles before the latter even had a chance to eat. SeaQuest management made no response, and no adjustments were made to ensure that the turtles were able to eat given the competition for food with the fish. There is a Google review dated in September 2023 that shows a Florida softshell turtle eating one of the display fish. While NJFW does not regulate the possession of captive fish, the fish on display are not an adequate food source for the turtles.
9. **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.6(f)**: "Zoos and nature centers must submit quarterly reports of births, deaths, acquisitions and disposals." SeaQuest failed to provide NJFW with accurate annual reports.
- a. January 18, 2022: Two photographs provided to NJFW show at least one juvenile giant day gecko, which was born at SeaQuest as a result of breeding. One of the two that hatched at SeaQuest reportedly died. None of the quarterly reports submitted to NJFW show any births or deaths of giant day geckos.
    - i. This is also a violation of N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.2(a), which states "Any false representation by the applicant or permittee who knows or reasonably should know that the representation to induce the Department to issue a permit or take any other action, shall subject the applicant

or permittee to all penalties available under State law, including revocation of any permit obtained under false information.”

10. **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.7(a)3**: “The method of acquisition did not violate the laws and regulations of this state, any other state, or the Federal government.” SeaQuest purchased turtles illegally. It is the permittee’s responsibility to ensure all animals are acquired legally.
  - a. January 19, 2022: Husbandry staff was pulled aside by the assistant general manager and was instructed to tell the public that the nine assorted turtles obtained during the winter of 2022 were donated instead of purchased from someone in Butler, NJ.
  - b. Furthermore, this is in violation of NJ Department of Health regulations N.J.A.C. 8:23-2.1(a), which states “Subject to, and except as otherwise provided at 21 C.F.R. §1240.62, viable turtle eggs and live turtles with a carapace length of less than four inches shall not be sold, held for sale, or offered for any type of commercial or public distribution” and N.J.A.C. 8:23-2.1(b), which states “Live turtles of carapace length of four inches or greater shall not be sold or in any way distributed or offered for sale or distribution within the State unless the person or entity seeking to sell or distribute the turtles warrants to the satisfaction of the Department of Health and Senior Services that each shipment of turtles is free from *Salmonella* contamination.” SeaQuest failed to provide documentation for these turtles, and falsified information regarding the origination of these turtles.
11. **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.6(g)**: “Periodic inspections shall be made by Division designated personnel and shall consist of examination of exotic mammals, birds, reptiles or amphibians, or nongame species, holding pen and exhibit area, and review of relevant records pertaining to these species. On numerous occasions, SeaQuest failed to provide records for all regulated exotic and nongame animals.
  - a. Relevant records, such as veterinarian records, intake forms, transfer forms, etc. shall include the species name. Records containing only the animal’s name, or a portion of the species name, are unclear and NJFW staff are unable to differentiate what record goes with what animal. NJFW is therefore unable to utilize documents with missing or incomplete information.
  - b. SeaQuest failed to provide records for the regulated wildlife in their possession during an inspection which took place December 20, 2023. At any given time when NJFW is conducting a site inspection, permittees are required to provide records of the regulated wildlife at SeaQuest.
12. **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.2(a)**: “Any false representation by the applicant or permittee who knows or reasonably should know that the representation to induce the Department to issue a permit or take any action, shall subject the applicant or permittee to all penalties available under State law, including revocation of any permit obtained under false information.” SeaQuest has modified data on documents required by NJFW.
  - a. Of the 69 veterinary documents SeaQuest provided NJFW, five of these records had the species name altered with pen. There is no indication whether SeaQuest staff or a veterinarian made these changes and therefore NJFW cannot accept these documents as true and accurate.
    - i. SeaQuest provided veterinarian records dated April 10, 2022, for a patient named “Simon.” The species name “African grey parrot” was crossed out and “Amazon parrot” was handwritten in. This species was never listed on SeaQuest’s permits, nor has

SeaQuest requested to possess this bird. Furthermore, there are 33 known species of parrots that comprise of the genus *Amazona*. “Amazon parrot” does not specify which species.

- ii. SeaQuest provided veterinarian records dated October 20, 2023, for a patient named “Ruby.” The species name was handwritten in blue ink as “red tegu.”
- iii. SeaQuest provided veterinarian records dated November 29, 2023, for a patient named “Diamond.” The species name “yellow-bellied slider” was handwritten on the document. SeaQuest has 0.0.3 yellow-bellied slider turtles listed on the 2023 Animal Exhibitor permit and there was no indication on the veterinarian document as to which animal was actually treated by a veterinarian.
- iv. SeaQuest provided veterinarian records dated December 29 for a patient named “Speedy.” The species name “red-eared slider” was handwritten on the document.
  1. SeaQuest provided veterinarian records on the same date for a patient named “Mississippi.” The species name “yellow-bellied slider” was handwritten in. Therefore, SeaQuest failed to provide veterinarian records for the third yellow-bellied slider.
  2. SeaQuest provided veterinarian records on the same date for a patient named “Billy,” which had its species name of “alligator snapper” handwritten in.

**Corrective actions that have not been resolved to this date:**

13. In a letter from NJFW dated April 20, 2021: “Health certificates must be acquired for all regulated mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds imported into the state and must be provided to the Wildlife Permits Unit any time when requested.”
  - a. In the first quarterly report for 2022, SeaQuest imported 0.0.3 Patternless Hourglass Tree Frogs and 0.0.3 South American Bird Poop Tree Frogs on March 30, 2022 from Josh’s Frogs in Michigan. SeaQuest failed to submit to NJFW certificates of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) from the state of origin.
14. In a letter from NJFW dated September 28, 2023: “Submit the most recent veterinary records for all regulated exotic and nongame animals. For any regulated animals that are being treated for ongoing conditions or illnesses, you must submit all records dating back to when these injuries or illnesses first started and documentation of each veterinary examination for these injuries/illnesses. The Wildlife Permits Unit must receive these documents within 7 days from the date of this letter, due date October 5, 2023.”
  - a. SeaQuest submitted a total of 14 documents for the following regulated exotic and nongame wildlife:
    - i. One veterinary record, which had the incomplete species name of “Two-toed sloth.” There are two distinct species of two-toed sloths: the Linnaeus’s two-toed sloth and the Hoffman’s two-toed sloth.

- ii. Five veterinary records containing the name of the animal only and no indication of the species.
  - 1. Ghost, who was euthanized on October 4, 2023.
  - 2. "Chip" is listed as "other" species.
  - 3. "Ducky" is listed as "reptile."
  - 4. "Suzy" is listed as "Mammalia." Two documents provided.
- iii. Six veterinary records containing the name of the animal and an incomplete species name:
  - 1. "Cruise" is listed as a "monitor."
  - 2. "Bonnie" is listed as a "lizard."
  - 3. "Todrick" is listed as "toucan."
  - 4. "Ruby" is listed as "tegu."
  - 5. "George" is listed as "uromastyx."
- iv. One veterinary record with the complete species name.
  - 1. Asian small-clawed otter
- v. One veterinary record with no name of the individual and no species name.
  - 1. Bloodwork was provided with no indication of species.

On October 13, 2023, NJFW advised SeaQuest via email that the requested veterinary documents were not received. On October 20, 2023, SeaQuest provided the following:

- vi. One veterinary record with the name of the individual and incomplete species name.
  - 1. "Suzy" was listed as a two-toed sloth. As mentioned above, there are two distinct species of two-toed sloths.
- vii. Seven veterinary records with the complete species name.
  - 1. Asian Small-clawed otter (male)
  - 2. Asian small-clawed otter (female)
  - 3. Asian water monitor (male)
  - 4. Keel billed toucan
  - 5. Asian Water Monitor (female)
  - 6. Red tegu
  - 7. Frilled Lizard
- viii. Three veterinary records for species not regulated by NJFW.

Out of the 50 individual regulated exotic and nongame wildlife at SeaQuest , the facility has provided veterinarian health records for 18 individual regulated exotic and nongame wildlife. Per **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.5(6)**, SeaQuest is required to provide requested documentation to NJFW is missing records for the following animals currently listed on the 2023 Exotic and Nongame Animal Exhibitor Permit:

- a. 1.0.0 Argentine Black and White Tegu. During a routine inspection that occurred on September 19, 2023, SeaQuest advised NJFW the animal was being monitored for potential liver disease.

- b. 0.0.9 Axolotl. On October 4, 2023, the only time one of the axolotls was seen by a veterinarian was to be euthanized after sustaining injuries after being attacked by a conspecific.
- c. 0.0.1 California Kingsnake
- d. 0.0.2 Cumberland Slider Turtle
- e. 0.0.1 Eastern Musk Turtle
- f. 0.0.2 Florida Softshell Turtle
- g. 0.0.3 Geyr's spiny-tailed lizard
- h. 0.0.2 Nubian Flapshell Turtle
- i. 0.0.2 Red and Green Macaw
- j. 1.0.0 reticulated python
- k. 1.1.0 Russian tortoise
- l. 0.0.3 yellow-bellied slider turtle
- m. 0.1.0 yellow crowned amazon parrot.

These violations, except for number 2 on page 2 (falsification by the applicant or permittee), carry a maximum penalty of \$50,000.00 pursuant to N.J.S.A. 23:2A-10 with each day being a separate offense and accruing a separate penalty if this violation is of a continuing nature. The penalty for falsifying information by the applicant or permittee is a disorderly persons offense which carries jail time of up to 6 months and a fine of \$1,000.00.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 23:20A-10(c), NJFW is authorized to compromise and settle any claim for a penalty in such a discretion of NJFW as may appear appropriate and equitable under any of the circumstances. NJFW hereby offers to settle this claim and reduce the penalty against you to \$2,500.00, provided that the following corrective actions are taken as described by July 10, 2024.

The penalty is payable by check or money order to: NJDEP Fish & Wildlife.

Mail to:  
NJDEP Fish & Wildlife  
Exotic and Nongame Permits  
Mail Code 501-03  
PO Box 420  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0420

**The following corrective actions must be adhered to immediately:**

1. **The fine of \$2,500.00 must be received by this office no later than July 10, 2024.**
2. **Improve husbandry for all regulated exotic and nongame wildlife.** Minimum husbandry standards are not being provided to the majority of the animals in your facility. The humidity and temperature ranges are not appropriate for many of the species at SeaQuest. Adjust parameters as needed for each species. Poor husbandry can lead to injury, illness, and ultimately death. All enclosures for regulated wildlife must be clean, free of debris and pests, and large enough to allow the animals to perform the normal behavior patterns of its species. NJFW strongly urges SeaQuest to research regulated wildlife to determine what their enclosures require. If enclosures are too small or conspecifics are showing signs of aggression towards one another, separate conspecifics and provide them with appropriately sized enclosures with the correct temperatures and/or humidities.
3. **All regulated wildlife must be provided with adequate veterinary care immediately.** Having a veterinarian simply walk through the facility and do a cursory check does not constitute adequate veterinary care. SeaQuest must also be able to provide legitimate evidence (i.e., notes, charts, etc. signed off by a licensed veterinarian) that all regulated wildlife has been appropriately cared for by a veterinarian. During the December 29, 2023 inspection, NJFW asked SeaQuest to provide the licensed veterinarian's signed walkthrough notes. To this date, SeaQuest has failed to provide these notes.
4. **Cease all unauthorized interactions.** Regulated wildlife may not be walked on a leash in public areas. The head and tail must be in direct control of authorized SeaQuest animal handlers. For authorized interactions between the public and approved regulated reptiles, only a two-finger touch may be utilized. Full-hand touches are not approved and must stop immediately. All photographs of unauthorized interactions at SeaQuest posted on websites and social media must be taken down immediately. Failure to comply immediately will result in the ceasing of all interactions.
5. **Veterinary records shall specify the species of animals OR provide NJFW with the names of all regulated animals at your facility.** Because various NJFW staff and other government agencies may request documents for the animals at SeaQuest, it can be difficult to decipher what records correspond with each individual animal. Providing the names of the regulated wildlife and/or having veterinary records specify the species will lessen any confusion.
6. **Daily interaction logs must be kept for each regulated exotic and nongame animal.** The animals at SeaQuest show signs of being chronically stressed from too many interactions. As a result, these animals are becoming sick and even dying. Interactions may not exceed the weekly allotment. Daily interaction logs must now be kept for all regulated wildlife that have authorized interactions and must be available at all times when requested by NJFW personnel. This will ensure that the regulated animals at SeaQuest are not stressed or overfed. Keeping track of the interactions will help ensure the care of the animals is prioritized. These records must be available for NJFW review at all times. Failure to comply will result in ceasing all interactions with regulated wildlife.

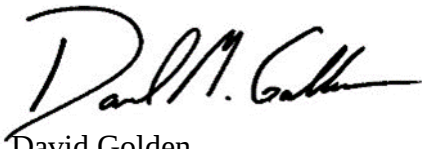
Due to the number and severity of the violations listed above, SeaQuest is in jeopardy of having their Exotic and Nongame Animal Exhibitor and Endangered Species permits revoked which also means the confiscation of the regulated wildlife currently at SeaQuest. **Until further notice, SeaQuest may not acquire any more regulated exotic and nongame wildlife, nor may SeaQuest add new regulated wildlife interactions to the facility.**

If SeaQuest adheres to the corrective actions immediately and pays the reduced penalty of \$2,500.00 by the deadline of July 10, 2024, then the matter will be considered concluded.

If, however, this matter is not settled as indicated above within the time specified, NJFW may proceed against SeaQuest as permitted by law and will seek the maximum penalties as defined in this Notice of Violation and any other remedies available by NJFW.

Please email our office at [NJWildlifePermits@dep.nj.gov](mailto:NJWildlifePermits@dep.nj.gov) with any questions or comments.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David M. Golden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being the most prominent.

David Golden  
Assistant Commissioner

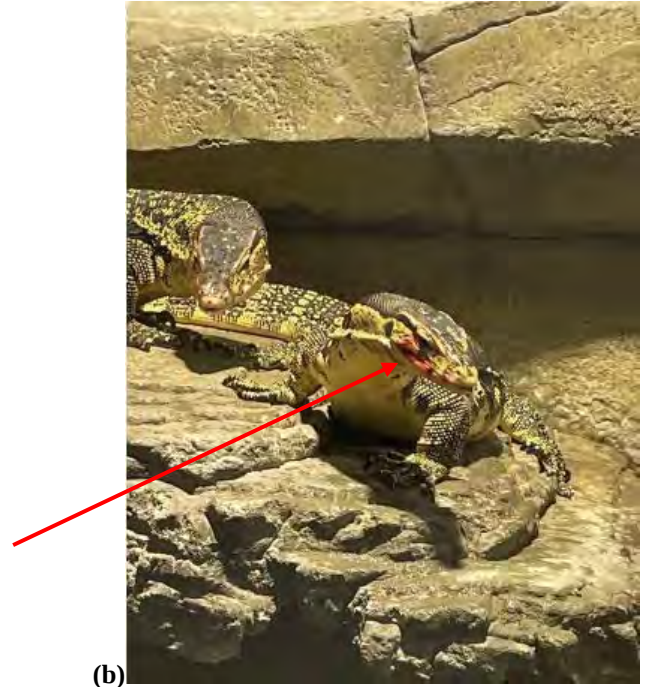
C: James Oxley, Chief, Bureau of Wildlife Management  
Sherry Preisig, Bureau of Wildlife Management  
Bureau of Law Enforcement, Central Region Office  
file

## Appendix



(a)

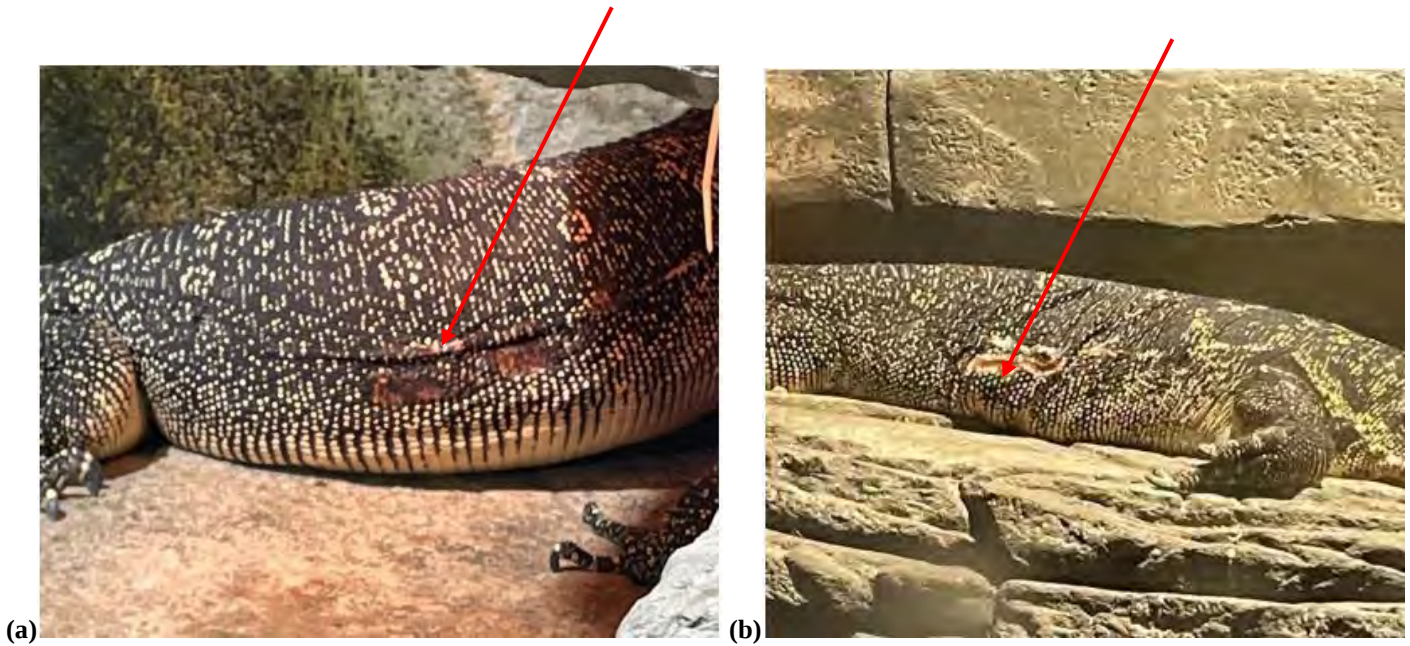
**Figure 1:** Asian Water Monitor with blood on both sides of its face.



(b)



**Figure 2:** Asian Water Monitor with stuck shed. This later turned into a bleeding sore after it was picked off by another animal in the same enclosure. Blood can be seen on the monitor's scales just below where the stuck shed was ripped off the animal.



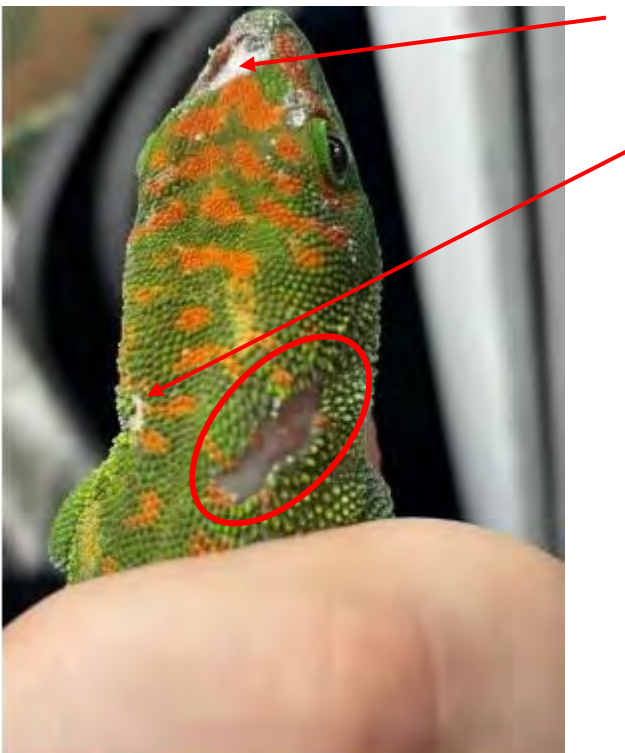
**Figure 3:** Burn marks on both sides of an Asian water monitor. These injuries occurred because the heat lamp was reportedly set too close to the basking area. The photo on the right (b) shows a burn that turned into an open wound.



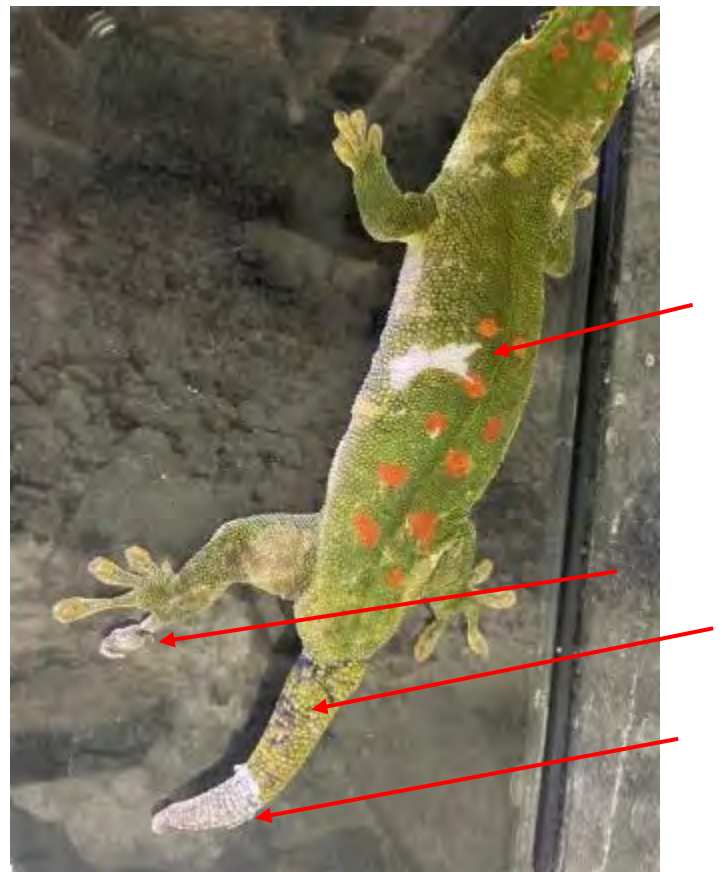
**Figure 4:** The Asian water monitors became territorial in their enclosure and would often fight with each other, often drawing blood. The photograph above shows blood that had been spilled at the food and water dishes.



**Figure 5:** Fighting between the Asian water monitors occurred all over the enclosure. Blood was spilled by these animals all over the terrestrial portions of the enclosure.



**Figure 6:** 9 giant day geckos were housed in an enclosure that only should have held a maximum of 5. As a result, the geckos would often fight one another for territory. This giant day gecko shows gashes on the back of its neck as well as on its nose.

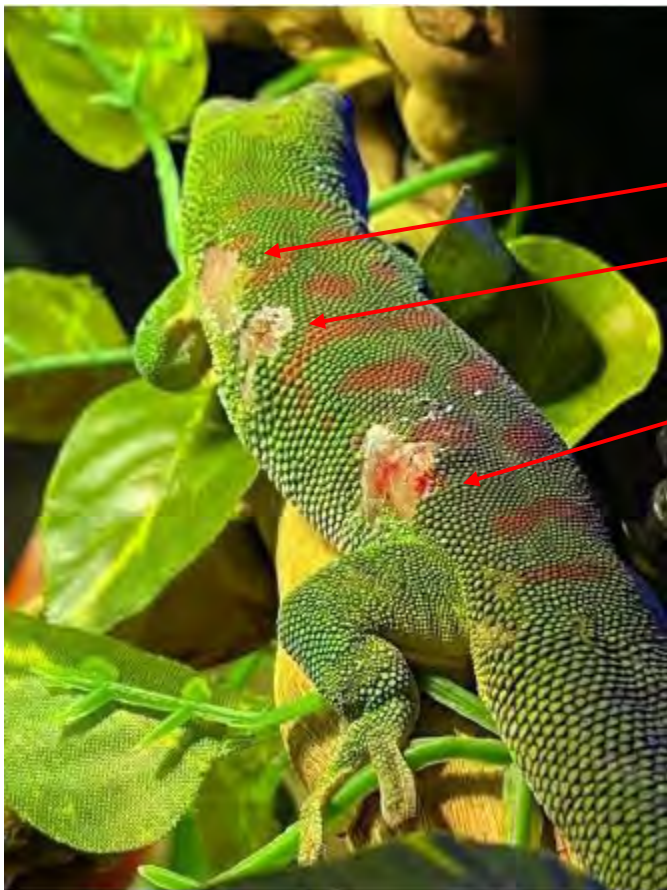


**Figure 7:** This injured giant day gecko has injuries on the side of its body, one of its hind toes, and the tip of its tail. Old

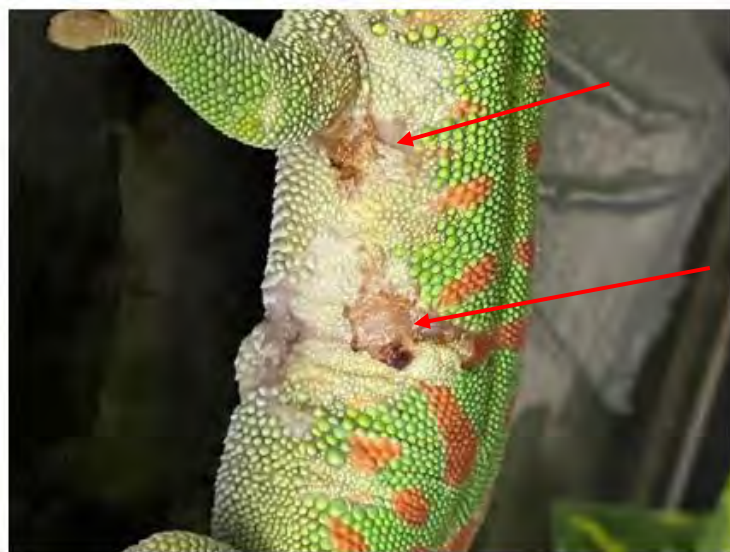
injuries can be seen towards the base of the tail as seen by new scales growing in



**Figure 8:** A giant day gecko with a large gash to the side of its body. Organs can be seen through a very thin layer of skin.



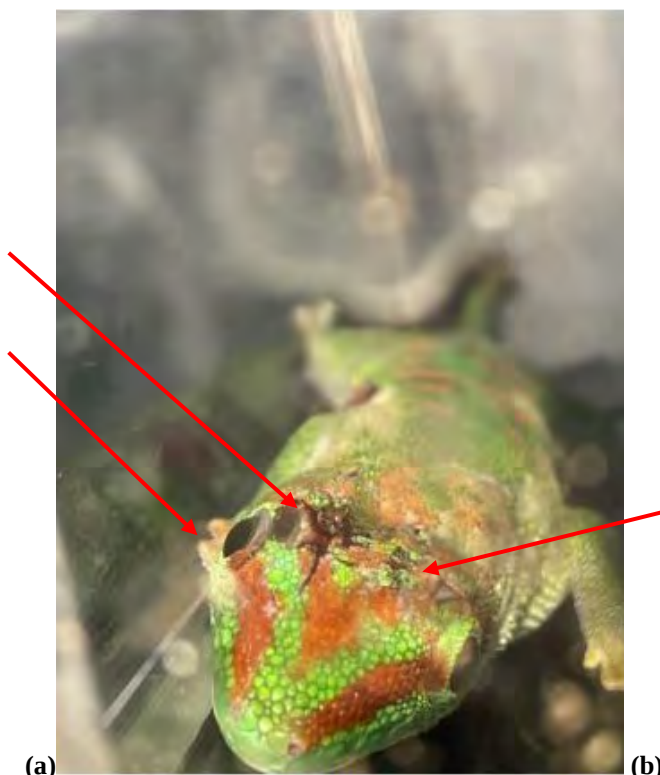
**Figure 9:** A giant day gecko with three large gashes on the side of its body.



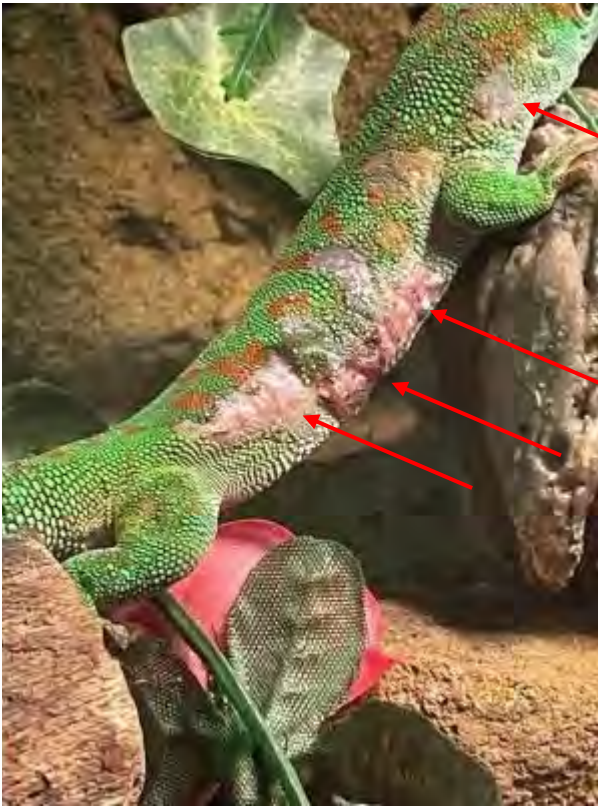
**Figure 10:** A giant day gecko with two gashes on the side of its body. The gecko's organs are visible in the bottom injury.



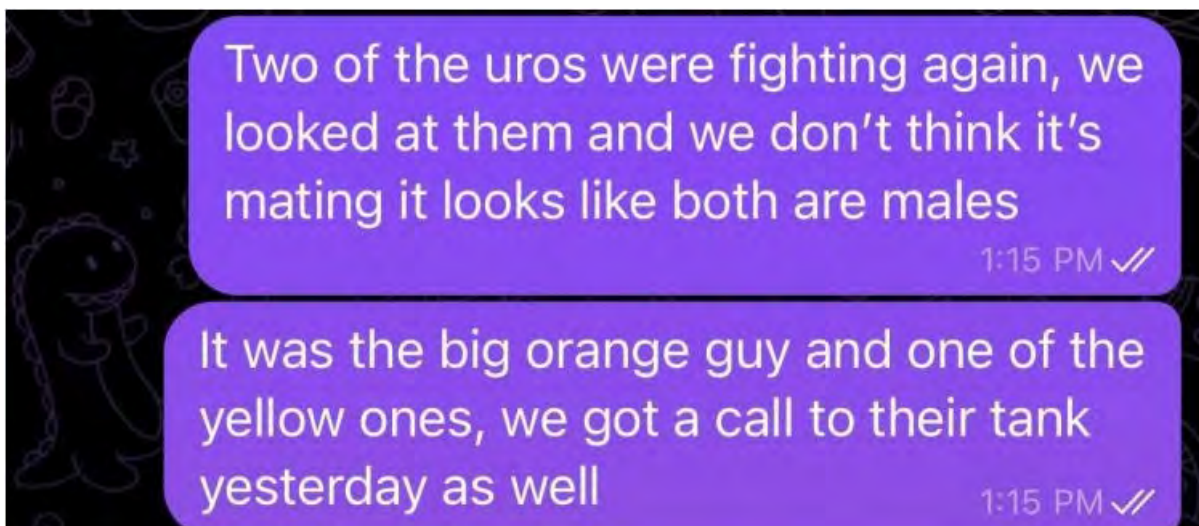
**Figure 11:** A giant day gecko with a serious injury on the side of its body. Part of the skin and scales were ripped from its body.



**Figure 12:** The photographs above show a seriously injured giant day gecko. On the left (a), a piece of the eye socket is missing. A large gash can be seen in the right (b) photograph.



**Figure 13:** A giant day gecko sports large gashes along the entire left side of its body. These gashes are as a result of the geckos fighting for space in an enclosure that was too small for them.



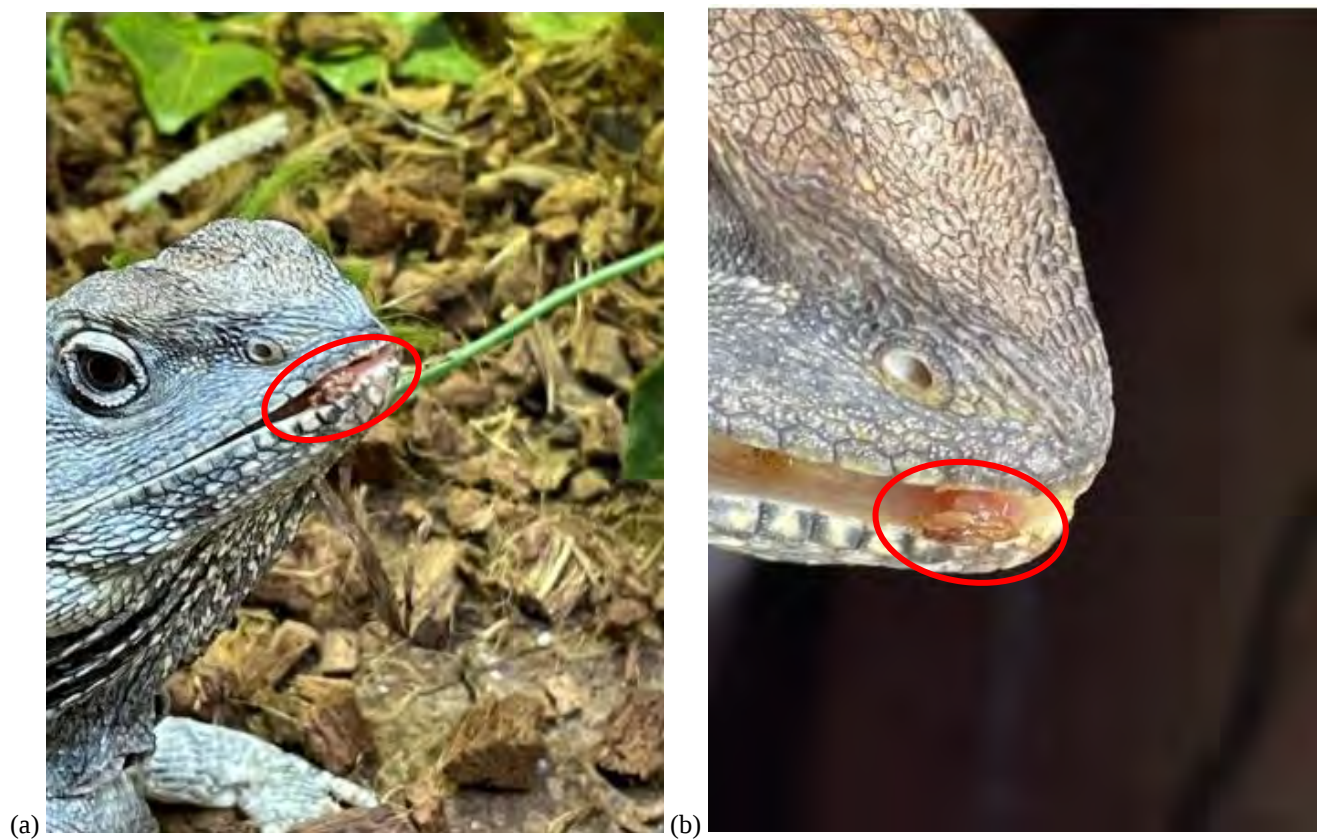
**Figure 14:** A text message dating May 20, 2022 explaining that two of the male uromastix were fighting in the enclosure. One was a yellow uromastix and the other was an orange uromastix.



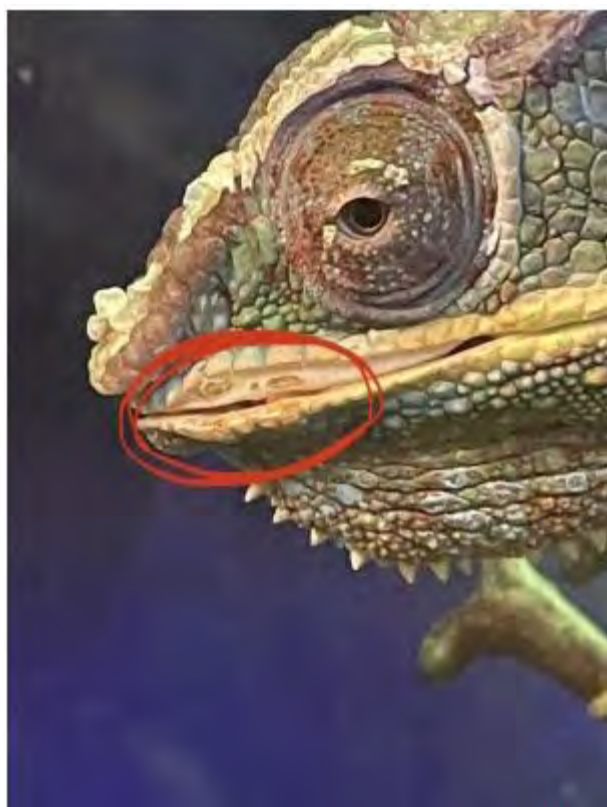
**Figure 15:** An orange uromastyx off exhibit. SeaQuest staff advised NJFW that this uromastyx was off exhibit for good because of an old injury. According to the veterinary records SeaQuest submitted to NJFW, this uromastyx was diagnosed with a fractured spine, severe dysecdysis (abnormal shedding), and metabolic bone disease on September 14, 2023. It is unknown if this is one of the uromastyx referenced the text message from figure 14.



**Figure 16:** Axolotl kept in the back room with infection on leg. This axolotl was witnessed by NJFW staff on April 5, 2024, and the axolotl was later euthanized on April 17, 2024.



**Figure 17:** Frilled lizard with mouth rot on the lower mandible. Photograph (b) shows a closeup of the infection.



**Figure 18:** Panther chameleon with mouth rot.



**Figure 19:** One of Asian small-clawed otters escaped on July 20, 2021 from its sleep box into the back room. This escape was

also caught on security camera but was not seen by staff until 20 minutes after the otter had escaped.



**Figure 20:** A tear in the mesh enclosure where the female prehensile tailed porcupine escaped.



**Figure 20:** One of the newly acquired turtles from Butler, NJ with severe shell rot.



(a)



(b)

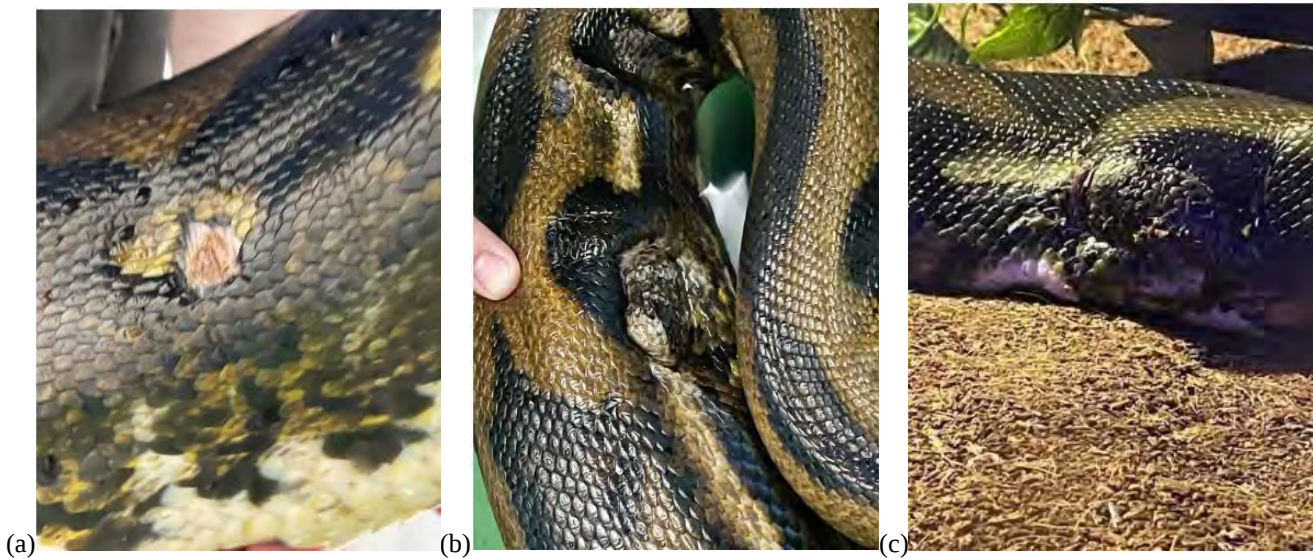
**Figure 21:** The shell rot from the turtles acquired from Butler, NJ spread to the other turtles already established in the enclosure. This adult fly river turtle, classified as endangered by the IUCN Red List, shows severe shell rot. The shell itself has started to blister and bleed, as shown in the photograph on the right.



**Figure 22:** The photograph on the left (a) shows a healthy scarlet macaw with little to no evidence of feather plucking. The center photograph (b) shows the same bird 11 months later with feather plucking of the upper thigh and under the wing. The photograph on the right (c) shows the same macaw after another month with further damage from feather plucking.



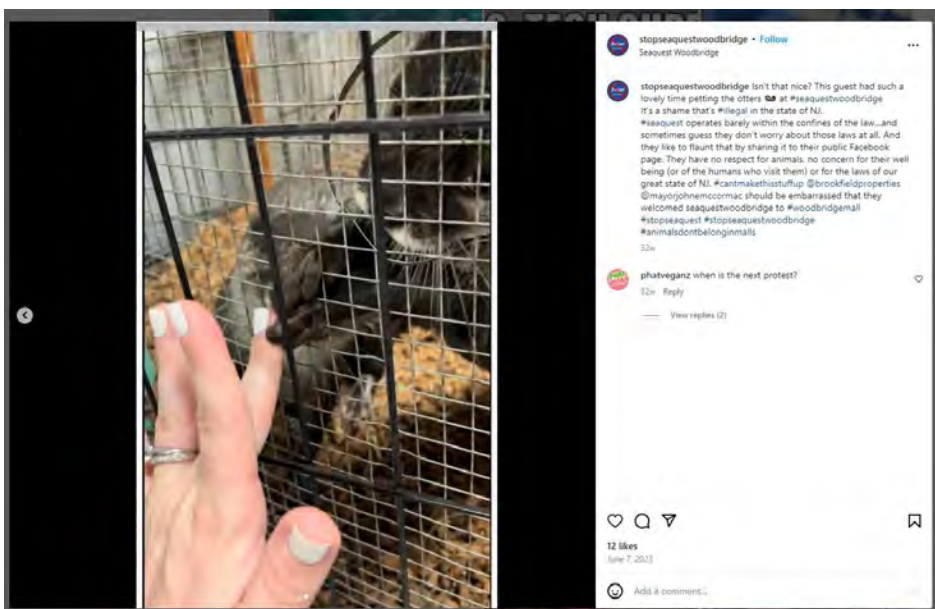
(a) (b)  
**Figure 23:** Blue-tongue skink exhibiting bubbling of the eye, which is indicative of a respiratory infection.



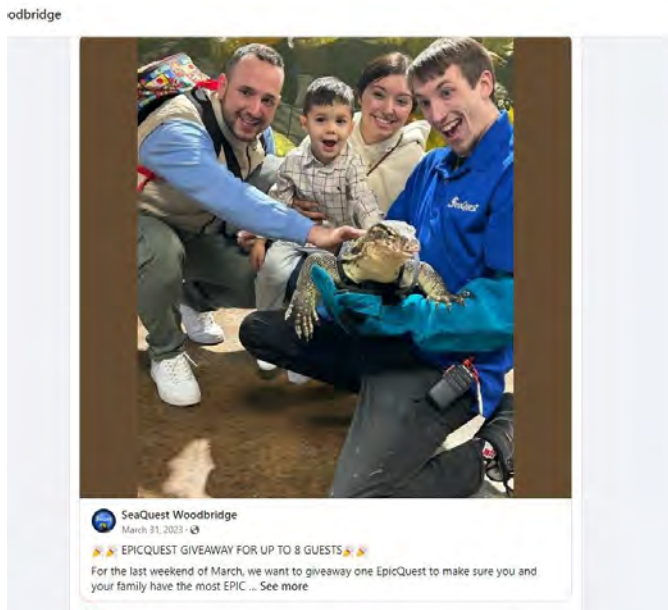
(a) (b) (c)  
**Figure 24:** Wounds at the site of an intramuscular injection given to a reticulated python by SeaQuest husbandry staff. The photograph on the right shows the growth that occurred as a result of the snake being treated by husbandry staff instead receiving adequate care by a licensed veterinarian.



**Figure 25:** An Asian-small-clawed otter reaching out and grabbing onto a SeaQuest husbandry staff's pant leg. This easily could have been a member of the public.



**Figure 26:** A guest at SeaQuest puts a hand up to the sleep box of the Asian small-clawed otters' (a potentially dangerous species) sleep box. Guests are permitted to go behind the scenes to the otter encounter area, but they are not allowed direct contact with the animal.



**Figure 27:** A SeaQuest staff member holds an Asian water monitor in his arms while guests pet the animal. SeaQuest's permit conditions require that the head and tail of regulated reptile species be held by SeaQuest animal handlers during interactions.



**Figure 28:** A SeaQuest animal handler walks an Asian water monitor on a leash and harness, which was not an activity approved by NJFW. All photographs show that the head and tail are clearly not held by the animal handler. Photograph (a) shows members of the public petting the regulated animal with open hands. Photograph (b) shows one of the animal handlers holding onto the leash with one hand; the animal is clearly not in direct control of the SeaQuest animal handler. The last photograph (c) shows members of the public, possibly a child, bending over the animal, which could have easily lunged at the person and injured them. Two more SeaQuest staff members look on and even take photographs of the unauthorized encounter.



(a) (b) **Figure 29:** An underweight panther chameleon (a) at SeaQuest Woodbridge LLC. The photograph on the left (c) shows a panther chameleon at a healthy weight (photo source: animalspot.net).