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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 30, 2012

ODA Statement Regarding Thompson Animal Quarantine Release

The following statement can be attributed to ODA Spokesperson Erica Pitchford:

The Ohio Department of Agriculture's review of the health of the five surviving animals from the Thompson farm is complete and no dangerously infectious or contagious diseases were found. The quarantine will be lifted later today, and the animals will soon be returned to Marian Thompson.

Mrs. Thompson has indicated that she intends to take the animals back to her farm in Zanesville and place them back into the cages which they inhabited prior to the October 18 tragedy. This raises concerns, as she has indicated the cages have not been repaired, and has repeatedly refused to allow animal welfare experts to evaluate if conditions are safe for the animals and sufficient to prevent them from escaping and endangering the community.

Unfortunately, current law gives enforcement powers to local authorities, not the state. While repeated appeals have been made to local authorities to seek a court order to inspect the Thompson party to ensure the safety of the animals and the public, so far, no such local action has been taken.

Hopefully legislation pending in the General Assembly will be completed soon so that new, broader, tougher rules can go into effect to better protect the public from dangerous wild animals and ensure these kinds of animals are kept under the care of veterinarians and in enclosures that are clean and adequate.

Until then we can only hope that local officials choose to act to prevent another tragedy.

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