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Animal Concern is a pressure group registered as a non-profit making Limited Company (Co. No. SC109126) established in 1988 as Animal Concern (Scotland) Ltd.

It incorporates the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society which was founded in 1876.

Animal Concern has made a St. Valentine's Day plea asking the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) to stop exploiting the love lives of their most popular animals. Ever since leasing Giant Pandas Tian Tian and Yang Guang from the Chinese Government for \$US 1m a year, Edinburgh Zoo has been trying to get the animals to produce cubs. When letting nature take its course failed Edinburgh Zoo brought in a team of vets and scientists to knock the animals out and subject them to what has become an annual artificial insemination session. For the last few years spring in Scotland has not been heralded by the call of the first cuckoo but by a deluge of Panda soft porn press releases on an is-she-or-isn't-she theme. This winter the Highland Wildlife Park has had its own is-she-or-isn't-she saga involving Victoria the Polar Bear. As with the Pandas the answer is that Victoria isn't pregnant.

John Robins of Animal Concern explains why he has asked the new Chief Executive of the RZSS to give the animals a break.

"The attempts at breeding Giant Pandas puts the animals at risk. Breeding Polar Bears in captivity is, at best, inadvisable. The only reason for doing this is to create cute cubs to bring in the paying public. Last year the Giant Panda was taken off the endangered species list due to work to protect wild Pandas from poachers and to save the forests they live in. Captive breeding had nothing to do with it. Captive bred Polar Bears cannot be released in the wild and there are very few zoos which can provide them with suitable conditions. Most captive bred Polar Bears literally go mad and die. Zoo keepers often say they love the animals in their care. If they truly love and care for Giant Pandas and Polar Bears the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland will stop trying to breed from them."

EDITORS NOTES: Below is our e-mail to the new CEO of the RZSS. Best numbers to contact John Robins on are: 07721605521 or 01389841111.

Monday 13th February 2017  
Ms Barbara Smith,  
Chief Executive,  
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland,  
Edinburgh Zoo,  
Corstorphine Road,  
Edinburgh EH16 6TS

Dear Ms Smith,

I write to you on the eve of St. Valentine's Day to make a heartfelt plea on behalf of some of the animals in your care.

In particular I am concerned about your plans for the love life of the pair of Giant Pandas in Edinburgh Zoo and the Polar Bears in the Highland Wildlife Park.

Since the RZSS started leasing the two Giant Pandas from the Chinese authorities they have been subjected to annual artificial insemination procedures. These procedures cause the animals a degree of distress and discomfort and involve the use of general anaesthetics which carry an inherent lethal risk.

Despite veterinary intervention the animals have failed to become pregnant either by natural or artificial means. This suggests that the animals are not a suitable breeding pair and, even if intrusive veterinary intervention did produce a pregnancy, in conservation terms it does not make sense to produce offspring from animals which have proven to be of low fertility.

There is another aspect to this which I ask you to consider. If a Giant Panda cub was born at Edinburgh Zoo what sort of life would it have? After a couple of years as an income generating visitor attraction in Edinburgh it would go back to its Chinese owners who would put it to work in the lucrative international Panda leasing and captive breeding programme.

Last year Giant Pandas were taken off the endangered species list. This was not because of the captive breeding programme but due to increases in the wild population thanks to work to combat poaching and habitat loss in China.

Please show that you truly care for the wellbeing of Tian Tian and Yang Guang by sparing them the ordeal of artificial insemination this year.

I also urge you to take steps to ensure that Victoria, the female Polar Bear at your Highland Wildlife Park, does not get pregnant this year. When Walker and then Arktos were brought to Kincaig I had high hopes that the RZSS was going to create a much needed sanctuary for Polar Bears. By actively seeking a female for breeding the RZSS dashed those hopes.

Minty, one of the last Polar Bear cubs bred at Edinburgh Zoo, was shipped out to Antwerp Zoo as soon as he outgrew the cute cuddly cub stage. A few months later I went to Antwerp and filmed Minty in his concrete Victorian era enclosure. He was displaying the classic symptoms of zoochosis; stereotypic behaviour involving repeatedly pacing around a small area of his enclosure and then swaying his head from side to side for long periods of time. He died in that enclosure when he was about five years old.

Kincaig makes an excellent sanctuary for polar bears coming from zoos which do not have the space or expertise to care for them properly. However it makes no sense to produce polar bear cubs as, when they reach the age when they have to be removed from their mothers, it would be difficult if not impossible to find them new homes of such a high

standard. If Victoria gave birth to cubs next winter can you tell me where they would be sent two or three years after that?

I hope that under your stewardship the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland will take a more enlightened approach to the breeding of animals and put a stop to commercially motivated breeding programmes involving Giant Pandas and Polar Bears.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,  
Secretary to Animal Concern