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Nevada County Fair Lacks Sufficient Safety Precautions for Elephant Rides

San Andreas, Calif. – The Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) contends that the Nevada County Fair does not have adequate information or an action plan to protect the public from the serious risks associated with elephant rides. The controversial rides will be offered for the first time at this year's Fair, August 7-11, in Grass Valley, California.

“The Fair has been lulled into complacency by false assurances that elephant rides are safe, when that is the farthest thing from the truth,” said PAWS president, Ed Stewart, who has more than 32 years of experience caring for elephants. “Our intention is not to discomfit the Fair board, but to inform the public that elephant rides pose a serious risk, and that there is insufficient preparation on the part of the Fair should an incident occur.”

PAWS recently filed a California Public Records Act request, and learned that the Fair lacks key information necessary to protect public safety. For example, there is no emergency plan that is specific to an elephant escape, a situation for which most law enforcement agencies are unprepared and unequipped. In fact, the Fair's evacuation plan calls for preventing people from entering buildings, the very places that might provide safe haven during an escape.

Other safety and security documents the Fair was unable to produce were:

- **An elephant escape and recapture plan provided by Have Trunk Will Travel**, the Southern California company providing the rides – Without a plan, there would be no communication and coordination between the elephant ride provider and the local first responders in the event of an escape.
- **Have Trunk Will Travel's protocol for securing elephants when they are not giving rides, during the daytime and overnight** – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) cited the company last year for failure to safely handle an elephant at a county fair in South Dakota. The elephant was left unmonitored while she was rested from giving rides, creating a risk to the public.

- **A history of Tuberculosis test results for all elephants owned by Have Trunk Will Travel, including those to be used for rides –**
Elephants can carry tuberculosis, which is transmissible to humans. Due to the prevalence of the disease in elephants and risks to public health, the USDA requires that all exhibitors test their elephants annually for tuberculosis.

In addition, the Fair did not produce veterinary records for the elephants to be used for rides, which would show whether they are suffering from diseases, such as arthritis and foot infections, commonly caused by inadequate captive conditions. Chaining and cramped confinement – during travel to the Fair and at the Fair – would exacerbate these conditions and negatively impact the elephants' welfare.

PAWS has long monitored and documented the numerous incidents involving elephants used for rides that have resulted in human injuries and deaths. In 2000, PAWS co-founder, the late Pat Derby, testified before a Congressional committee on this serious safety issue.

“We are urging the Nevada County Fair to cancel the elephant rides because they are unsafe, outdated and inhumane,” said Stewart. “For over a century the Fair has been successful without elephant rides – and the serious risk and controversy that come along with them.”

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Founded in 1984, PAWS operates three sanctuaries for captive wildlife in Galt, Herald and San Andreas, California, that are home to more than 100 rescued and retired animals, including eight elephants, African lions, bears, tigers and other exotic animals.

PAWS is licensed by the U.S. Department Agriculture and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. It is accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, and is rated a 4-star charity with Charity Navigator.