

Rainbow World Exotics: PetSmart Supplier Investigation, 2007

Excerpts From the Investigator's Log Notes

Saturday, September 15, 2007

We ... went out to feed the big birds who are all kept outside in hanging cages made out of wire mesh. I have never seen anything like this, it was like a bird factory—which I guess is exactly what it is. ... There were several birds whose food dishes were empty.

Sunday, September 16, 2007

[In the aviary t]here were 2 birds—I believe sun conures—loose who [a worker] chased around with a net for a while, asking me to scare the birds toward him. He eventually caught them by spraying them with a hose until they fell to the ground. . . . [The worker] said that some mornings, dead birds are found. He said they basically die of heart attacks, because at night animals, mostly raccoons, will crawl up/over the bird cages, and it will literally scare them to death.

Monday, September 24, 2007

One of the baby cockatoos was found dead by an employee who worked in the nursery yesterday ...

Wednesday, September 26, 2007

[The chinchillas] are kept in small barred boxes piled on top of each other. I asked an employee how many die, he said maybe 6-7/day. I saw one dead in a cage and another dead [lying] on a wooden ledge next to the cages.

Friday, September 28, 2007

In the [Distribution Center]: I found a dead winter white [hamster] on the floor being eaten by flies. ... There was a gerbil on the floor [who] was dead and squished almost beyond recognition. ... There are always animals running all over the floor

[A worker] found a bird in the outdoor cage of umbrella cockatoos who had gotten a string wrapped around his/her foot. It looked like it had been like this for weeks. The string was imbedded into the bird's foot to the point where skin was growing over it. ... Pieces of the bird's foot and nails were missing, and the bird was limping.

Saturday, October 13, 2007

I watched an employee today hold a hamster in his right hand while walking over to the trash bins. As he approached the bins he threw the hamster on the floor in a very forceful way to try and kill the hamster. ... He then picked up the hamster and threw him/her in a large blue plastic garbage tub. ... I went over to the tub, looked in, and saw the hamster was still crawling around. I reached in and pulled the hamster out. S/he had a little blood coming out of his/her nose, but other than that appeared to be shaken up, but fine. I brought this hamster to [a supervisor] and explained what I had seen. He grabbed the hamster, looked at him/her for a half of a second, then snapped the hamster's neck [with one hand] and threw him/her in the blue trash bin without confirming the animal was dead. He then gave me a look as if the problem had been solved, and walked away. . . .

When [a supervisor] was sorting through bins of hamsters: I watched him throw dozens of hamsters away, some alive, some dead. He was throwing them into big trash tubs that were about 5-8 feet away from him. He would occasionally miss and then the hamster (if not already dead) would be trampled by other employees, or run and hide under whatever s/he could find. At one point, one of the female employees was standing in front of the trash barrels, and instead of

walking around her to throw away a hamster (not sure if s/he was dead) he threw the hamster at her back and all the employees laughed.

While I was emptying tubs of bedding into the trash, I watched [a supervisor] throw a very small robo hamster at the trash bins, but he missed and the hamster landed on the floor. She was thrown about four feet in distance, and approximately five feet into the air. I watched this little hamster as she lay still for several minutes. I thought she was dead, but she slowly started to move. She was being covered by shavings that were meant to be thrown in the trash but missed. I picked her up, brushed her off and asked another employee if I could have her since she was being thrown away anyway. The employee said yes, she didn't care and didn't see why not. After leaving work I immediately took this hamster to a veterinarian [who] said she had a little irritation around her right eye [but that it should heal and] be fine. The vet said this hamster looked to be in otherwise perfect health and was a very sweet little girl. She is now doing well in my care and I have named her Meeka.

Thursday, October 18, 2007

When we walked in [the ferret barn], almost all of the racks were empty or cleared out. I asked where they all went. [The supervisor] said, "[The owner] asked me to get rid of some." He said he had to destroy them because they can't sell them if they aren't fixed, and most of them were older. . . . Sometimes ferrets get a prolapsed rectum. [The supervisor] showed me one with a prolapse. It was just the start of one, the rectum looked red and sore. He said they should heal on their own ...

Tuesday, October 23, 2007

Inside the [Distribution Center]. There was a bin on the floor that had flooded and there were maybe 20 or more dead hamsters floating in the water.

Friday, October 26, 2007

In the DC: ... One of the guinea pigs was chewing on the paw of a hamster who didn't appear to be breathing. A different hamster (as well as some of the guinea pigs) was eating another hamster who was still breathing. . . .

I was helping unload animals and cages from one of the trucks. [The supervisor] said these were extra animals leftover from the delivery to stores. RWE loads lots of "extra" animals for the drivers to take on their routes to replace any animals who die or get sick during transport. I asked if that happens very often. [The supervisor] said yes, especially with the guinea pigs. He said the guinea pigs die all the time. ... While unloading the truck I came across 14 dead hamsters. . . .

In the corner of the truck next to the cab, I lifted up an empty cage and found there were many hamsters (alive) hiding behind it. There were approx 8 who scattered around the truck once I lifted up the cage. [The supervisor] tried to stop them from running and caught one by crushing him with his boot. He held him/her pinned with his foot for a few seconds, then picked up the hamster and squished him/her more with his hand. ... Then [the supervisor] grabbed a broom and swept out the remaining hamsters. Most of them scattered back into the DC and hid.

Tuesday, October 30, 2007

[A worker] took blood from the 6 birds being moved to the aviary to find out what sex they are. ... This was done by cutting one of the birds' nails with nail clippers until it would bleed. ... Many times the birds would not bleed on the first few cuts and she had to keep cutting. I asked if this hurts the birds, she said yes. The birds struggled and screamed and appeared to be in a lot of pain during this process. ... [The worker] said when the bird screams she knows she has hit the

blood line. One of the conures became very sick shortly after blood was taken. S/he was lying on the bottom of the cage not moving very much and starting to feel cool to the touch.

Saturday, November 3, 2007

When I was emptying bins of dirty shavings, I found dozens of dead hamsters, mice and gerbils. Some looked eaten, some had begun to decompose, others looked like they had recently died. One of the bins had 5 dead mice, and a live one who was running around.

Wednesday, November 7, 2007

[A worker] pointed out a rabbit who was "not a very good mom." I asked why, he said she ate 2 of her babies and chewed the ears off the other one.

Thursday, November 8, 2007

In the chinchilla barn I noticed there were many chinchillas with large metal discs around their necks, about 3 inches across. I asked the employee working why they had these on. He said the collars indicate which ones are female. The cages are set up with small holes leading from one cage into the next. There is one female in each cage, wearing a collar that's large enough to keep her from being able to get through the hole into the next cage. The males don't wear collars, and so are able to go into multiple females' cages so they can breed as frequently as possible.

I went into the procedure shed where rabbits are neutered. . . . I noticed blood in the cages of 2 of the rabbits who he had already neutered. I asked why there was so much blood. Referring to one of the rabbits, he said he probably should have "kept him under" for longer because the rabbit ended up kicking off his own testicle. . . . While [the supervisor] was starting to slice into the first rabbit, I noticed the animal was still moving. His body seemed tense and [he] was trying to curl his legs together. . . . He attempted to cut into the rabbit's skin 3 times and still hadn't broken the skin. . . .

After [the supervisor] finished neutering the second rabbit, I asked if he was going to check the 2 who had blood in their cages. He said he would. He took out the brownish-white colored rabbit who he said had kicked off his testicle and put him back under the gas. In this rabbit's cage, approx half of the shavings were soaked in blood. The lower section of the rabbit's body (between his legs) was completely covered in blood. [The supervisor] used Clorox lemon disinfecting wipes to cleanse the area. He found a vein that had not been completely tied off. He pulled the veins and remaining loose skin out and tied it again. He then took the second rabbit out of his cage and found this rabbit was also bleeding. This rabbit also had blood on his nose and face.

Saturday, November 10, 2007

At least 5 tubs out the 10 I changed had live mice who were eating dead mice because there was no food in their tub. In three of the tubs, mice were eating off the faces of other dead mice. In another tub one mouse was eating the intestines of another.

Tuesday, November 13, 2007

In the DC, there were approx 30 crates filled with winter white, Russian and robo hamsters. . . . The crates were divided into 4 separate sections each smaller than the size of a shoebox. I counted approx 30 hamsters per section. So there were approx 3,600 hamsters in these crates. When stacked as they were, they would all fit in the size of an average household closet.

Saturday, November 17

In the rabbit barn: There were 3 baby rabbits just recently born lying on the wires on the bottom of the cage. Their mother was pacing, not even acknowledging the babies. They looked to be only

a couple days old. They didn't have any fur and their eyes were still closed. Only one of them was moving. One of them was bloody and looked like s/he had been half-eaten. Another wasn't moving at all. . . .

There was a tan colored rabbit who appeared dead in his/her cage. The other bunnies were huddled around this rabbit. . . . A few cages down there appeared to be another dead rabbit (brown). I asked [the supervisor] about this rabbit. He said this rabbit was also dead.

[L]ast week I was helping another employee change out the bedding when I noticed 2 of the guinea pigs had scars/wounds on their backs. . . . I asked if there was a treatment for them such as an ointment that could be applied or something. He said they have never used one and they should all heal on their own. . . . He said something along the lines of, "It doesn't matter anyway because it's not like they're goin' for sale."

Tuesday, November 20, 2007

In the DC: Employees were changing out mice tubs. They pick them up by their tails and toss them into another bin. [A worker] explained if the mice are also being sexed, they have the lower region of their bodies squeezed until either their testicles and/or penis are pushed out far enough to be seen. If nothing is seen they are deemed female. . . . This is the same process used for sexing most of the small animals.

[A worker] said when [rabbit] babies are born many times they are born "on the wire." This means the mother does not know to move them to the nest and they [lie] helplessly on the wire of their cages after birth. Many die this way. [The worker] said he does not like the cages with the larger wires . . . because when the babies are born on the bottom of these cages, they fall through the metal wires into the waste pans where they usually die.

[The worker] said the other day he found 6 rabbits who had been born on the wire. . . . In this litter [the worker] said one of the babies "didn't get the sac off" and "got smothered."