

Zoo asks for unwanted pets to feed to big cats

11th August 2025



A zoo in Denmark has made an unusual request to pet owners. The Aalborg Zoo in the north of the country has asked people to donate unwanted pets, such as chickens, guinea pigs, rabbits, and small horses. These will not be exhibited as part of the zoo's collection.

Instead, they will become food for the resident big cats and other predators. The zoo is attempting "to imitate the natural food chain of the animals". It added that using the unwanted small creatures as food is practical because "nothing goes to waste, and we ensure the natural behaviour, nutrition and well-being of our predators". It reassured people that the donated pets will be "gently euthanized" before being fed to other animals.

The zoo said that the practice of putting down animals to be used as feed was common in Denmark. Pia Nielsen, deputy director of the zoo, said: "Many of our guests and partners appreciate the opportunity to contribute." Regardless, there has been mixed reaction on social media. Some people felt sad about the euthanasia scheme, and wanted to protest. However, a man who donated a horse to the zoo was satisfied with its treatment. He said his animal was put down "in the most peaceful and calm way". There is so much interest in helping the zoo that there are waiting lists to donate horses. Donors can even receive a tax deduction based on the animal's value.

Sources: cnn.com / theguardian.com / cbsnews.com

Writing

Zoos are essential to help conserve animals. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

zoo / unusual request / donate / rabbits / horses / big cats / predators / food chain / guests / partners / euthanasia / protest / satisfied / calm / peaceful / list / tax

True / False

- 1) The article said a request made by a zoo was not at all unusual. T / F
- 2) The zoo wants unwanted horses so it can feed them to its big cats. T / F
- 3) The zoo doesn't want to waste even small creatures. T / F
- 4) The donated pets are put to sleep before they are killed. T / F
- 5) There is unanimous support for the zoo's request on social media. T / F
- 6) A horse owner was shocked because of how his horse was treated. T / F
- 7) There is a waiting list for people to donate their horses. T / F
- 8) Horse owners who donate their animals to the zoo can get a tax break. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. request | a. care |
| 2. exhibited | b. put to sleep |
| 3. imitate | c. tranquil |
| 4. well-being | d. put on display |
| 5. euthanized | e. discounting |
| 6. common | f. copy |
| 7. appreciate | g. widespread |
| 8. treatment | h. appeal |
| 9. calm | i. be grateful for |
| 10. deduction | j. welfare |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of zoos?
- b) What do you think of the zoo's request for unwanted pets?
- c) Would you ever donate an unwanted pet to be used as food?
- d) What else could the zoo do to get meat for its animals?
- e) Should big cats be kept in zoos?
- f) How important is it for zoo animals to be part of a natural food chain?
- g) What does it mean to be gently euthanized?
- h) What advice do you have for the zoo?

Phrase Match

1. A zoo in Denmark has made an unusual
 2. guinea
 3. These will not be exhibited as part
 4. food for the resident big cats
 5. pets will be gently euthanized before being
 6. the practice of putting down animals
 7. Some people felt sad about the
 8. He said his animal was put
 9. There is so much interest
 10. Donors can even receive a tax deduction
- a. of the zoo's collection
 - b. down
 - c. and other predators
 - d. to be used as feed
 - e. based on the animal's value
 - f. request to pet owners
 - g. in helping the zoo
 - h. euthanasia scheme
 - i. pigs
 - j. fed to other animals

Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What do you think of the practice of putting down animals?
- c) What might the mixed reaction be on social media?
- d) Is the scheme OK if the pet owners are happy?
- e) What experiences of zoos do you have?
- f) Will there always be zoos?
- g) Will AI animals take over from real animals in zoos?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the zoo?

Spelling

1. the resident big cats and other atorsrped
2. teitma the natural food chain
3. the unwanted small etarusecr
4. tninuirto and well-being
5. It eusrrased people
6. pets will be gently aedunzieht
7. deyput director of the zoo
8. partners teeacprpai the opportunity
9. slredeasrg, there has been mixed reaction
10. itsedfias with its treatment
11. Donors can even receive a tax dcditoeun
12. seabd on the animal's value

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. d	3. f	4. j	5. b
6. g	7. i	8. a	9. c	10. e

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	To whom did a zoo appeal for unwanted pets?
2.	What kinds of animals will end up eating the donated pets?
3.	What does the zoo want to imitate?
4.	What did the zoo say becomes wasted?
5.	How are the donated pets put to death?
6.	Who is appreciative of the chance to help the zoo?
7.	How did some social media users feel about the euthanasia scheme?
8.	How did a man feel about how his horse ended his days?
9.	What is there a list to do at the zoo?
10.	What can donors of horses get?

Speaking – Pets

Rank these with your partner. Put the best pets at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Cat
- Hamster
- Horse
- Chicken
- Rabbit
- Goldfish
- Dog
- Parrot

Answers – True False

1	F	2	T	3	T	4	T	5	F	6	F	7	T	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.