



**ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
CASE NUMBER 26-026517**

INVESTIGATOR:

Detective: Deputy Aaron Bennett
EID: 9626
Specialized Patrol Section
Agricultural Crimes Unit
2500 West Colonial Drive
Orlando, Florida 32804
407-254-7000

OFFENSE INFORMATION:

Offense: Aggravated Animal Cruelty
Florida State Statute: 828.12(2)
Date of Occurrence:
Time of Occurrence:
Location of Occurrence: 7547 International Dr. Orlando, FL 32819 and
1304 22nd Street #1, Orlando, FL 32805

VICTIM INFORMATION:

Name: State of Florida

DEFENDANT INFORMATION:

Name: Not Applicable
Age:
Date of Birth:
Race / Sex:
Address:

Social Security:
Date of arrest:
Time of arrest:
Location of arrest:

LAW ENFORCEMENT INFORMATION:

ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Agricultural Crimes Unit

2500 West Colonial Drive, Orlando, FL 32804

(407) 254-7000

Deputy

Case was assigned to investigate animal cruelty.

Detective

I was lead investigator assigned to review Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's initial investigation related to Sloth World. I conducted numerous interviews and reviewed documents pertaining to the case.

OUTSIDE AGENCIES INFORMATION:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

620 S. Meridian St.

Tallahassee, FL

(850) 488-4676

FCW Investigator Rick Brown and Steven McDainels

Conducted FWC captive wildlife inspections from August 2025- April 2026

WITNESS INFORMATION:

Name: Agresta, Benjamin Richard

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

**ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
CASE NUMBER 26-026517
EID 9626**

Race/Sex: W/M

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Mr. Agresta was the owner of Sloth World. Mr. Agresta provided information on his care team and stated he provided unlimited funds to support the animals' welfare. Mr. Agresta provided an audio/video recorded interview.

Name: Bandre, Peter Albert

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/M

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Mr. Bandre was the head animal caretaker and importer of the sloths. Mr. Bandre provided details on importation and the overall care provided for the sloths. Mr. Bandre provided an audio/video recorded interview.

Name: Bee, Chelsea T

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/F

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Ms. Bee is an educator for the Central Florida Zoo. Ms. Bee was an animal caretaker for Sloth World and provided information on animal care while employed from December 2024- April/May 2025. Ms. Bee provided audio/video recorded interview and a sworn written statement.

Name: Billiar, Suzanne Terese

**ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
CASE NUMBER 26-026517
EID 9626**

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/F

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Dr. Billiar was Sloth Worlds first veterinarian and she provided necropsy reports. Dr. Billiar did not provide an interview.

Name: Bodan Jr, James Ernest (DVM)

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/M

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Dr. Bogan is Chief Veterinarian at Central Florida Zoo. Mr. Bogan provided information on animal wellbeing upon arriving to Central Florida Zoo. Br. Bogan provided two sworn written statements.

Name: Bussom, Erin Joyce

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/F

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Ms. Bussom is a curator for the Central Florida Zoo. Ms. Bussom provided information on husbandry and details from when Central Florida Zoo obtained the sloths from the International Drive warehouse. Ms. Bussom provided a sworn written statement.

ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
CASE NUMBER 26-026517
EID 9626

Name: Chabot, Robert Michel

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/M

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Mr. Chabot is the Chief Operating Officer at the Central Florida Zoo. Mr. Chabot provided information on his role in preparing U-Haul vans for Central Florida Zoo which were used to transport the sloths. Mr. Chabot provided a sworn written statement.

Name: Dial, Debra J

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/F

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Ms. Dial is an AZA husbandry expert and runs the species survival plan (SSP) for sloths. Ms. Dial also has a website scienceofsloth.com. Ms. Dial provided expert testimony on husbandry care for sloths; additionally, she provided her expert opinion and theories into what might have happened to the sloths. Ms. Dial provided an audio/video recorded interview.

Name: Hackett, Kayce Elizabeth

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/F

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Ms. Hackett is an animal caretaker for Central Florida Zoo. Ms. Hackett provided information on her role when Central Florida Zoo arrived at the International Drive warehouse to take possession of the sloths. Ms.

ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
CASE NUMBER 26-026517
EID 9626

Hackett provided a sworn written statement.

Name: Henderson, Kenndall Taylor

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/F

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Ms. Henderson is an animal caretaker for Central Florida Zoo. Ms. Henderson provided information on her role when Central Florida Zoo arrived at the International Drive warehouse to take possession of the sloths. Ms. Henderson provided a sworn written statement.

Name: Lane, Jennifer Lynn (DVM)

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/F

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Dr. Lane was a veterinarian employed by Sloth World. Dr. Lane provided information on her role as the veterinarian, the care that was provided, and where she received her care information from. Dr. Lane provided an audio/video recorded interview.

Name: Noble, Kristen Terrese

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/F

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Ms. Noble is an animal caretaker for Central Florida Zoo. Ms. Noble provided information on her role when Central Florida Zoo arrived at

ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
CASE NUMBER 26-026517
EID 9626

the International Drive warehouse to take possession of the sloths. Ms. Noble provided a sworn written statement.

Name: Pagello, Paul David

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/M

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Mr. Pagello is Head of Facilities for Central Florida Zoo. Mr. Pagello provided information on assisting with renting U-Haul vans and collecting items donated from Sloth Worlds' International Drive warehouse to Central Florida Zoo. Mr. Pagello provided a sworn written statement.

Name: Restrepo, Rebecca Lynn

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/F

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Ms. Restrepo is an educator at the Central Florida Zoo and former animal caretaker for Sloth World. Ms. Restrepo provided information on animal care procedures from January 2025 till April/May 2025. Ms. Restrepo provided an audio/video recorded interview and a sworn written statement.

Name: Roberts, John Ford

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/M

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Dr. Roberts is the Head Pathologist at Bronson Animal Disease

**ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
CASE NUMBER 26-026517
EID 9626**

Diagnostic Laboratory in Kissimmee, FL. Dr. Roberts provided detailed information on necropsies performed by him or his team at Bronson Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory. Mr. Roberts also advised all the sloths that were necropsied were chronically ill on or before arrival to the U.S. Mr. Roberts provided an audio/video recorded interview.

Name: Solan, Laura Audrey Marie

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/F

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Ms. Solan was a manager for Sloth World. Ms. Solan provided information on the day-to-day animal care team's role involving feeding, cleaning, and care. Ms. Solan provided an audio/video recorded interview and a sworn written statement.

Name: Stern, Adam Wayne (DVM)

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/M

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Dr. Stern is a Professor for the University of Florida and is a Veterinary Forensic Pathologist. Dr. Stern provided a written note summary to FWC on overview of necropsy findings. I received Dr. Stern's notes from FWC.

Name: Straub, Haley Marie (DVM)

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/F

Address: [REDACTED]

ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
CASE NUMBER 26-026517
EID 9626

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Dr. Straub is an assistant veterinarian at Central Florida Zoo. Dr. Straub provided information on the sloth's wellbeing upon arriving to Central Florida Zoo. Dr. Straub provided a sworn written statement.

Name: Young, Sydnee Renae

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/F

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Ms. Young is a veterinarian technician at Central Florida Zoo. Ms. Young confirmed Dr. Lane reached out to her in reference to sloth information and that 2 links emailed were recommended by Dr. Bogan. Ms. Young provided an audio/video recorded interview and a sworn written statement.

Name: Zimmerman, Shannon L

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Race/Sex: W/F

Address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Testimony: Ms. Zimmerman is the Head Curator for Orlando Science Center. Ms. Zimmerman provided her statement on what she observed when she assisted Central Florida Zoo with taking possession of the sloths from the International Drive warehouse. Ms. Zimmerman provided an audio/video recorded interview and a sworn written statement.

BACKGROUND:

There are no prior calls related to this incident involving the Orange County Sheriff's Office. All previous incidents were reported and investigated by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

INVESTIGATIVE DETAIL:

In May 2026, the Orange County Sheriff's Office began an investigation to determine whether any criminal activity led to the deaths of dozens of sloths imported from overseas to establish the Sloth World attraction.

On May 8, 2026, at approximately 1334 hours, I arrived at the first quarantine location (Q1), located at 7547 International Drive. Upon arrival, the facility was secured and locked, preventing an interior inspection. An exterior walk-around was conducted, during which I observed an active exterior water spigot with running water, four rear wall-mounted air conditioning units, and a water softening system.

At approximately 1356 hours, I arrived at the Sloth World exhibit location, located at 6582 International Drive. The main lobby area appeared vacant, and the rear exhibit doors were closed, preventing observation of the interior. An exterior observation of the side hallway revealed an empty area containing a water filtration system, a sink, and several empty boxes.

At approximately 1425 hours, I arrived at the second quarantine location (Q2), located at 1304 22nd Street. The facility was secured and locked, preventing an interior inspection. During an exterior walk-around, I observed six wooden animal shipping crates, each containing two silver bowls consistent with animal food or water containers. A partially torn document located on top of one crate identified the animal species as "*Choloepus didactylus* Perezoso de

dos dedos” (two-toed sloth) and contained the name “*Pete B*” and an address located in the United States.

While at these facilities, I activated my BWC and submitted the videos into evidence.

On May 15, 2026, a forwarded email was sent to me originating from Senior Wildlife Inspector Jennifer Irving with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. The email explains that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Inspection Program is responsible for regulating wildlife being imported and exported from the United States. Senior Wildlife Inspector Irving confirmed U.S. Fish and Wildlife’s records indicated that all sloths imported by Mr. Peter Bandre were in compliance with import regulations. In her email, Senior Wildlife Inspector Irving advised none of the species of sloths were protected under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) or the Endangered Species Act at the time of import. Senior Wildlife Inspector Irving further informed two sloth species, *Choloepus Didactylus* and *Choloepus Hoffmanni*, were listed as Appendix II under CITES, effective March 5, 2026. However, the most recent import of these species by Mr. Bandre occurred on March 2, 2026, which is prior to the effective date of the listing, therefore, no CITES permits were required.

As part of my investigation, I reviewed several documents that were provided by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The documents included an official report that was prepared by FWC Investigator R. K. Brown. From my review of the reports, I learned the following:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) inspection reports document multiple inspections of the Sloth World/Sanctuary World Imports facilities between August 2025 and April 2026. These inspections provide a chronological account of the facilities’ operations, animal inventories, regulatory compliance, and the progressive decline of the imported sloth population.

On August 7, 2025, FWC Investigator R.K. Brown conducted an unannounced routine inspection at 7547 International Drive, Orlando, Florida,

the quarantine facility operated by Sanctuary World Imports, Inc. At that time, the facility housed six (6) two-toed sloths imported on July 1, 2025. Investigator Brown documented in his report that the building was climate controlled with heating, air conditioning, humidification, environmental monitoring, climbing structures, nesting areas, and appropriate food and water sources. During the inspection, Investigator Brown reported he observed that two sloths were being housed in undersized temporary cages that did not meet the minimum caging requirements established under Chapter 68A, Florida Administrative Code. Additionally, the temporary cages were not properly labeled as required for animals maintained under the temporary housing exception. A verbal warning was issued, and Mr. Peter Bandre advised the cages would be incorporated into larger enclosures to correct the deficiency. During the same inspection, Investigator Brown interviewed Mr. Bandre regarding the deaths of 31 imported sloths between December 2024 and February 2025. Mr. Bandre stated the December 2024 Guyana shipment was received before the facility was adequately prepared, explaining that the building lacked electrical service, running water, and sufficient heating, resulting in what he described as a "cold stun" event. Mr. Bandre further advised that the Peru shipment arrived in poor physical condition, with two animals dead upon arrival and the remaining animals reportedly succumbing to pre-existing health conditions.

I also learned, on March 9, 2026, FWC Investigator Brown conducted separate inspections of both quarantine facilities following notification that Mr. Bandre had surrendered his wildlife licenses and was no longer affiliated with the business. Brown documented that ownership and licensing responsibilities had transitioned to Mr. Benjamin Agresta, operating as Sloth World Inc. At the 7547 International Drive location, Investigator Brown observed approximately seven (7) sloths, including one temporarily housed in a properly labeled quarantine enclosure. The facility was found to be clean, food and water were available, staff were actively cleaning, and no obvious signs of illness or distress were observed. At the 1304 22nd Street location, Investigator Brown documented 21 sloths, including 4 juveniles temporarily housed in properly labeled enclosures. Environmental conditions, enrichment,

and husbandry practices appeared appropriate, and Investigator Brown reported no captive wildlife discrepancies at either location. Investigator Brown did note that acquisition records were unavailable because Mr. Bandre had retained them following his departure from the company.

Additionally, I learned that on March 19, 2026, Senior Investigator Steven McDaniel conducted an unannounced inspection of the Sloth World facilities located at 6582 International Drive, 7547 International Drive, and 1304 22nd Street, Orlando. The public exhibit facility remained under construction and contained no wildlife. The quarantine facilities collectively housed approximately 28 two-toed sloths. Senior Investigator McDaniel documented that the enclosures were appropriately climate controlled, equipped with enrichment devices, nesting areas, fresh food, water, and veterinary-directed nutritional programs. One sloth was temporarily housed in a smaller quarantine enclosure; however, the enclosure was properly labeled and complied with the temporary housing provisions of Florida Administrative Code. Senior Investigator McDaniel noted no significant husbandry deficiencies, although he recommended updates to the facility's Critical Incident and Disaster Plan (CIDP). Mr. Benjamin Agresta also advised he was attempting to obtain acquisition records and necropsy reports following the departure of former licensee Mr. Peter Bandre.

Through the documents provided, I learned that on March 24, 2026, Investigator Brown conducted a scheduled records inspection of the business. Acquisition documents associated with imported sloths from Peru were reviewed, although many records were written in Spanish. Investigator Brown instructed Sloth World personnel to create facility inventory records documenting the receipt of imported animals. The Critical Incident and Disaster Plan was also reviewed, and minor administrative corrections were requested. Staff were observed cleaning and feeding the animals. No captive wildlife violations were identified, according to the records.

The provided documents revealed that on April 21, 2026, Investigator Brown conducted an unannounced complaint inspection after receiving information that several employees had resigned and multiple sloths had died during

**ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
CASE NUMBER 26-026517
EID 9626**

March and April 2026. Mr. Agresta confirmed that only he and Courtney Massam remained responsible for the care of the animals. Investigator Brown documented that the second quarantine facility at 1304 22nd Street had been vacated and its remaining sloths were transferred to 7547 International Drive on April 14, 2026. Investigator Brown further documented that the inventory had declined from 26 documented sloths on March 9, 2026, to only 13 live sloths by April 21, 2026. Three deceased sloths were present in a freezer awaiting disposition, and Investigator Brown calculated approximately 11 sloth deaths had occurred during the preceding six-week period, along with an unexplained two-animal inventory discrepancy. Mr. Agresta advised that the facility's veterinarian had discontinued providing services due to personal health concerns. Despite the significant mortality, Investigator Brown observed staff actively cleaning enclosures, providing food and water, and documented no captive wildlife violations during the inspection.

According to the records, on April 28, 2026, Investigator Brown returned to the International Drive properties and confirmed that both quarantine and exhibit facilities had been vacated. The property owner advised that the remaining sloths had been transferred to the Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens. Investigator Brown confirmed the quarantine facility was being dismantled, and that development of the planned public exhibit had ceased.

As part of this investigation, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission additionally provided the Orange County Sheriff's Office with the veterinary forensic pathology reports and findings summarized by Dr. Adam Stern, a Veterinary Forensic Pathologist and Professor at the University of Florida. In summary, Dr. Stern's review indicates the pathology findings consistently demonstrate that multiple sloths were affected by a widespread infectious disease process, most likely viral, which impacted numerous sloths over a relatively short period. Although the final cause of death was not definitively established for every sloth at the time the reports were completed, the pathology findings reveal a consistent pattern of disease affecting multiple organ systems.

Furthermore, Dr. Stern's review of the pathology reports document recurring lesions involving respiratory, gastrointestinal, immune, and neurological systems. Common findings included pneumonia, pulmonary edema, gastritis, enteritis, gastric dilation, severe inflammation, bone marrow depletion, and, in several cases, degeneration of the brain and spinal cord. Dr. Stern's findings among multiple sloths are similar and the pathological findings are consistent with a common disease process rather than isolated or unrelated illnesses.

During further review of the reports, I learned diagnostic testing identified evidence of several viruses, including sloth Gamma Herpes Virus, Changuinola Virus, possible parvovirus-like particles, and additional unidentified viruses undergoing genetic sequencing. Multiple reports describe the disease process as systemic, indicating infection involving multiple organs throughout the body. Dr. Stern noted the reports further indicate that additional laboratory testing was necessary to determine the significance of certain viral findings and whether specific viruses represented the primary cause of disease or incidental findings.

The pathology notes from Dr. Stern advised the reports also identify stress as a significant contributing factor in the progression of disease. According to Dr. Stern, herpesviruses may remain dormant within an infected animal and reactivate when the animal experiences stress or immunosuppression. Dr. Stern stated one report specifically concluded that transportation stress likely resulted in reactivation of a latent herpesvirus in one sloth. Additional stressors identified throughout the reports include transportation, environmental changes, housing conditions, lighting, nutrition, husbandry deficiencies, overcrowding, and chronic stress, all of which are recognized as factors capable of suppressing immune function and increasing susceptibility to infectious disease.

Based on Dr. Stern's notes and the pathology findings, the disease progression is consistent with stress-related immune suppression allowing dormant or newly acquired viral infections to disseminate throughout the body. The resulting systemic infection produced widespread inflammation and damage involving the lungs, gastrointestinal tract, nervous system, and immune

system, ultimately resulting in severe illness and death in multiple sloths. Dr. Stern further advised reports indicated that once clinical signs became apparent, disease progression could occur rapidly over a period of several days to a few weeks.

Dr. Stern's review concludes that the pathology findings support a common systemic infectious disease outbreak, most likely viral, affecting multiple sloths. The reports further indicate that stress-related immune suppression and husbandry-related stressors likely contributed to disease susceptibility and progression. While Dr. Stern informed the reports do not link every death to a single pathogen or conclude that husbandry deficiencies alone caused the deaths, they consistently identify infectious disease, acting in conjunction with stress-related factors, as the most probable explanation for the widespread illness and deaths observed among the sloths.

On May 21, 2026, A sworn written statement was obtained from Dr. James Bogan, Chief Veterinary Officer with Central Florida Zoo. Dr. Bogan's written statement regarding his observations and medical evaluation of the 13 sloths transferred from Sloth World to the Central Florida Zoo and Botanical Gardens (CFZ) on April 24, 2026. Dr. Bogan was responsible for overseeing the medical care and evaluation of the animals following their arrival at the Central Florida Zoo.

Doctor Bogan stated the majority of the sloths arrived at the Central Florida Zoo in poor condition, with body condition scores below 5/9. He advised five of the sloths arrived with liquid diarrhea, and four of those animals later died. Dr. Bogan stated necropsy examinations performed by him determined the deceased sloths were emaciated.

Doctor Bogan advised additional viral and toxicology testing was pending at the time of his statement. He documented that the animals arrived with significant health concerns requiring further medical evaluation and treatment.

On May 28, 2026, Dr. James Bogan stated that, after reviewing the medical records, many of the sloths appeared to have possibly been overmedicated. He

specifically identified the frequent use of Enrofloxacin as a concern, explaining that antibiotics can negatively affect the gastrointestinal microbiome of sloths and potentially contribute to gastrointestinal complications.

Dr. Bogan explained that treating sloths can be challenging because medical guidelines continue to develop as additional knowledge and experience are gained. He stated neither veterinarian at the Central Florida Zoo had communicated with a veterinarian associated with Sloth World.

It should be noted on May 19, 2026, Dr. Bogan stated he would not testify on behalf of what care another veterinarian had provided.

On May 26, 2026, Dr. Haley Straub, who is the Associate Veterinarian at Central Florida Zoo, provided a sworn written statement regarding the medical condition of the 13 sloths after their arrival at Central Florida Zoo.

Doctor Straub stated she provided veterinary care for the transferred sloths beginning April 24, 2026. She documented that five animals required intensive medical intervention, including hydration, bloodwork, glucose stabilization, and nutritional support.

Doctor Straub identified one sloth named Bandit as the most critical animal upon arrival, describing him as lethargic, hypoglycemic, dehydrated, and in poor overall condition.

She advised four sloths died after arrival at the Central Florida Zoo, and necropsy confirmed all deceased animals were emaciated. Dr. Straub identified the animals suffered from severe gastrointestinal disease likely caused by multiple contributing factors, including stress, diet, temperature regulation, antibiotic use, and environmental factors.

On May 20, 2026, Kayce Hackett, who is Animal Care Staff Member from Central Florida Zoo, provided a sworn, written statement regarding her involvement in the April 24, 2026 transfer of sloths from Sloth World to Central Florida Zoo. Ms. Hackett participated in the animal assessment, transport preparation, and collection of supplies from the Sloth World facility.

**ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
CASE NUMBER 26-026517
EID 9626**

Ms. Hackett stated she responded to Sloth World on April 24, 2026, where Ben Agresta introduced himself and allowed Erin Bussom to initially assess the animals. Ms. Hackett stated the facility appeared clean, had electricity and water, and the holding areas appeared appropriately sized for the number of animals present.

Ms. Hackett identified several animals requiring immediate medical attention. She observed Bandit lying on the floor of his enclosure appearing critical, Ginger with a prolapse, and Lucky foaming at the mouth. Ms. Hackett stated several sloths were extremely thin after arrival at Central Florida Zoo.

Ms. Hackett documented that Sloth World personnel advised there were 14 sloths available for transfer, but only 13 were present. Ben Agresta later advised one sloth, Pisco, had died.

Ms. Hackett also documented that after the transfer she returned to Sloth World to collect donated items. She received a message from Rebecca Kuerk, a former Sloth World employee, regarding Mr. Peter Bandre offering assistance with a possible virus affecting the sloths.

The donated items were itemized on a spread sheet and sent to me along with numerous photographs taken by Central Florida Zoo employees. The photographs were reviewed along with the spread sheet and uploaded into evidence.com

On May 21, 2026, Erin Bussom, who is the lead Curator for the Central Florida Zoo provided a sworn, written statement regarding the initial contact between Sloth World and Central Florida Zoo and the subsequent transfer of 13 sloths into Central Florida Zoo care.

Ms. Bussom stated she received communication from Ben Agresta on April 20, 2026, requesting assistance with immediate placement of the sloths. After internal discussions, Central Florida Zoo agreed to accept the animals.

Ms. Bussom stated Central Florida Zoo staff arrived at the Sloth World warehouse on April 24, 2026, where she was initially allowed inside to assess the animals. She described the facility as having appropriate enclosures, food

and water bowls, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) supplies, humidification equipment, refrigerators, and animal care records.

Ms. Bussom identified Bandit, Lucky, and Ginger as animals requiring immediate veterinary attention. She observed Bandit on the floor eating substrate, Lucky with "*froth*" around his mouth, and Ginger with diarrhea and a "*prolapsed cloaca*."

Ms. Bussom stated Central Florida Zoo staff transported 13 sloths back to CFZ after discovering one fewer animal than expected. Ben Agresta advised that one sloth had died prior to transport.

On May 21, 2026, Robert Chabot who is the Chief Operating Officer at Central Florida Zoo provided a sworn, written statement regarding his involvement in the transportation and transfer of the sloths from Sloth World to Central Florida Zoo.

Mr. Chabot stated he transported a team of Central Florida Zoo personnel to the Sloth World warehouse on April 24, 2026, using rented U-Haul vehicles. He observed the facility and described it as appearing adequately set up, with caging containing the sloths.

Mr. Chabot observed Bandit lying on the ground and appearing unhealthy. He also observed a juvenile sloth that staff identified as sick.

Mr. Chabot assisted with loading the animals into transport vehicles and transporting them to Central Florida Zoo. Upon arrival, he observed the animals requiring medical attention were taken directly to the animal health center, while the remaining sloths were placed into quarantine.

On May 21, 2026, Paul Pagello who is the Facilities Director for Central Florida Zoo provided a sworn, written statement regarding his role in arranging transportation and assisting with the removal of animals and equipment from Sloth World.

Mr. Pagello stated he was notified on April 22, 2026, that CFZ may acquire sloths from Sloth World and assisted in arranging transportation. He selected cargo vans as the appropriate method for transport.

Mr. Pagello advised upon arrival at Sloth World, the facility appeared organized and the habitats appeared adequate for the number of animals present. He stated he did not have direct contact with the sloths and did not assist with animal handling.

Mr. Pagello assisted with transporting the animals and later returned to Sloth World to collect equipment, including habitats, cages, refrigerators, humidification equipment, animal records, and other supplies donated to Central Florida Zoo.

On May 21, 2026, Kristen Noble, Animal Care Staff Member from Central Florida Zoo, provided a sworn written statement regarding her participation in preparing Central Florida Zoo's quarantine areas and assisting with the transfer of the Sloth World animals.

Ms. Noble stated Central Florida Zoo staff prepared quarantine enclosures prior to the arrival of the sloths. Upon entering Sloth World, she observed enclosures that appeared clean and appropriately equipped, including food and water bowls, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) supplies, humidification equipment, and medical information boards.

Ms. Noble identified Bandit as being on the ground and Ginger as having liquid stool and a rectal prolapse. She assisted with placing the animals into transport crates and transporting them to Central Florida Zoo.

Ms. Noble confirmed that only 13 sloths were transferred despite expectations that 14 animals would be received.

On May 26, 2026, Kenndall Henderson, Animal Care Staff Member from Central Florida Zoo, provided a sworn, written statement regarding her participation in the Sloth World transfer and subsequent care of the animals.

Ms. Henderson stated she responded with Central Florida Zoo staff to collect 14 sloths from Sloth World on April 24, 2026. She observed the facility contained appropriate enclosures, humidification equipment, diet information, and medical information.

Ms. Henderson observed Bandit eating substrate while lying on the floor and identified several animals requiring veterinary evaluation. She assisted with crating the animals and confirmed that only 13 sloths were ultimately transferred.

Upon arrival at Central Florida Zoo, Ms. Henderson stated the sickest animals were evaluated by veterinarians and that all sloths showed signs of dehydration and possible malnutrition.

On June 2, 2026, Rebecca Restrepo, who is an educator at Central Florida Zoo, provided a sworn written statement regarding her employment at Sloth World, her observations of animal care practices, and her knowledge of the facility's operations.

Ms. Restrepo stated she worked at Sloth World from January 2025 through May 2025 and did not observe intentional animal abuse. However, she described concerns regarding the facility's experience level and husbandry practices.

Ms. Restrepo explained diets changed frequently and staff appeared to be learning proper sloth care while operating the facility. She stated several animals arrived in poor condition and questioned whether some animals came from legitimate sanctuary sources.

Ms. Restrepo described concerns regarding inconsistent feeding practices, antibiotic use, animal handling procedures, tick infestations, and veterinary decisions. She advised Mr. Peter Bandre had informed her the USDA Veterinarian had stated to give critical care products containing Timothy Hay were provided despite sloths being leaf-eating animals.

Ms. Restrepo stated she believed the owners cared about the animals but became overwhelmed and started operations before they were fully prepared.

She did not believe the owners intentionally neglected or abused the sloths but believed they lacked the necessary knowledge and experience to properly manage the number of animals.

On June 6, 2026, Chelsea Bee, who is an educator at Central Florida Zoo, provided a sworn written statement and interview regarding her employment at Sloth World Orlando from approximately December 2024 through April or May 2025. Ms. Bee advised she only worked in Quarantine Building 1 (Q1) and was involved in the daily care, monitoring, and treatment of sloths housed at the facility.

Ms. Bee advised when she began employment, she did not believe Q1 was not adequately prepared to house sloths. She described the building as a former garage-type structure that lacked insulation and had not yet had permanent heating and air-conditioning units installed. Ms. Bee stated that during unusually cold weather in December 2024, space heaters were purchased in an attempt to maintain appropriate temperatures. Ms. Bee advised the heaters caused a breaker to trip overnight, leaving the sloths exposed to low temperatures without anyone present to recognize or correct the issue. Ms. Bee believed the cold exposure caused stress and contributed to other health complications among the sloths.

Ms. Bee informed me that Sloth World did not initially have a veterinarian but obtained veterinary services in January 2025. She advised staff members were instructed by the veterinarian to provide medical care including subcutaneous fluid injections, critical care diets, and other treatments. Ms. Bee stated employees followed the veterinarian's recommendations, and she was not aware of anyone refusing to provide required care. Ms. Bee also advised she attempted to seek additional assistance by contacting veterinary technicians at Central Florida Zoo but did not receive a response.

Regarding daily husbandry, Ms. Bee stated employees monitored food consumption by weighing food before and after feedings, visually monitored water consumption, regularly checked body temperatures, sanitized thermometers between uses, and checked the sloths' abdominal areas for signs

of bloating or illness. Ms. Bee described the diet provided during her employment as consisting of softened herbivore biscuits, spring mix/lettuce, carrots, sweet potato, yellow squash, cucumber, and occasional fruit such as banana and papaya for older sloths. Ms. Bee advised rice was not fed by Sloth World while she was employed.

Ms. Bee stated she believed the cages and quarantine setup were adequate and the staff replaced soiled linens and blankets as needed. She advised she did not believe the facility had more sloths than staff could manage. Ms. Bee estimated that when she began working at Sloth World, the facility housed approximately three three-toed sloths and eleven or twelve two-toed sloths.

Ms. Bee further stated in her opinion she believed Mr. Peter Bandre and Mr. Benjamin Agresta requested juvenile sloths because they were considered more adaptable to captivity than adults or baby sloths. However, Ms. Bee stated the importers ultimately sent the animals that were available rather than specifically selecting juveniles.

On June 18, 2026, I met with Ms. Shannon Zimmerman, Head Curator for Orlando Science Center. Ms. Zimmerman advised the following in a sworn, written statement and interview. Ms. Zimmerman explained she arrived at the Sloth World warehouse on April 24, 2026, to assist in moving the remaining living sloths to the Central Florida Zoo. Ms. Zimmerman advised while there she saw the building had heat/ac and humidifiers. There was perching, hides, substrate and space for most of the animals, but the juvenile sloth was not housed in adequate space. Ms. Zimmerman did not see any food or water provided for the animals and stated many of the animals looked in poor condition. Ms. Zimmerman informed me the sloths appeared dehydrated, (lack of shiny noses), some were lying on the ground and were lethargic and the juvenile had a red swollen, prolapsed cloaca with obvious signs of diarrhea. Ms. Zimmerman advised that Mr. Agresta's fiancée, Ms. Courtney Massam, stated that she had just noticed that.

On June 4, 2026, I met with Ms. Debra Dial via a Teams Meeting online. Ms. Dial is the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plan

(SSP) coordinator for sloth species, founder of Science of Sloths, an international sloth conservation organization, coordinator of the International Sloth Symposium, and has approximately 20 years of experience as an assistant curator and husbandry manager at the National Zoo in Baltimore.

Although Ms. Dial provides medical theories on the sloths' wellbeing, it should be noted that Ms. Dial is not a licensed veterinarian with medical training, nor did she participate in the necropsies of the deceased sloths, but she did review some of the reports.

Ms. Dial provided a sworn verbal statement regarding her knowledge and involvement with the Sloth World investigation. Ms. Dial explained that sloths occupy a unique position because they do not fall within existing wildlife classifications. She advised sloths are non-native species, are not primates, and are not currently recognized as rabies-vector species, resulting in fewer specific regulatory requirements compared to other captive wildlife species.

Ms. Dial advised that American Zoological Association has published sloth care guidelines for many years, with the most recent modern publication updated in January 2026. She stated these guidelines are publicly available and provided free of charge.

Ms. Dial stated she became aware of Sloth World in early 2026 after seeing media reports and hearing concerns from contacts in Costa Rica regarding multiple sloth deaths. She stated that hearing about deaths among imported sloths was not uncommon; however, the number of deaths at Sloth World was concerning to her. Ms. Dial advised Sloth World to be aware of Science of Sloths because they were members of the organization's Facebook group and had communicated with the organization multiple times. Ms. Dial also advised Dr. Jennifer Lane to contact Science of Sloths on August 12, 2025, requesting access to the veterinarian password-protected section of the website. Ms. Dial provided Dr. Lane access on August 14, 2025, and advised her to contact Science of Sloths if she needed additional information or specific guidelines. Ms. Dial stated Dr. Lane responded that she appreciated

access and was new to sloth care and wanted to do what was right for the animals.

Ms. Dial advised she reviewed information provided by the state pathologist to evaluate potential causes of death and identify issues that could prevent similar incidents in the future.

Ms. Dial discussed the concept of "Sloth Syndrome," which can occur even in highly experienced zoological facilities. However, Ms. Dial stated the conditions described by the pathologist did not appear consistent with traditional Sloth Syndrome. She explained Sloth Syndrome typically develops over an extended period and would not normally cause multiple animals to decline and die within two to four weeks.

Ms. Dial stated the medical findings described to her appeared more consistent with husbandry issues, including environmental conditions and temperature concerns. She advised that when a sloth's body temperature drops significantly, recovery may not be possible and secondary complications such as pneumonia can occur.

Ms. Dial stated she did not believe the deaths were primarily caused by viral disease. She explained that many viruses identified in sloths are commonly found in approximately 70–80% of wild sloth populations.

Ms. Dial stated the pattern of illness was inconsistent with a viral outbreak because all affected animals followed a similar disease progression regardless of age, origin, or shipment group. She stated it would be unlikely for multiple shipments of animals from different regions to contract the same disease, progress through the same clinical stages, and die in the same timeframe unless there was another underlying factor.

Ms. Dial further advised a newly emerging or novel virus could change that assessment, but based on the available information, she did not believe viruses were the primary cause.

Ms. Dial advised she was contacted after state pathology personnel became involved and began reviewing the case. She stated she contacted Mr. Benjamin Agresta regarding transferring ownership of the remaining sloths.

Ms. Dial stated the Central Florida Zoo was also communicating with Mr. Agresta about receiving the animals. After coordinating with Zoo Curator Ms. Erin Bussom, Ms. Dial assisted with transferring the sloths to the Central Florida Zoo, which was the closest AZA-accredited facility capable of accepting the animals. Ms. Dial advised she traveled to Orlando to assist with the capture and transfer and advised Central Florida Zoo personnel to record the process to document proper handling due to the wild-caught nature of the sloths.

Upon arrival, Ms. Dial stated Mr. Benjamin Agresta and his fiancé, Ms. Courtney Mossam, were present. Ms. Dial stated the first significant concern raised was when Agresta's fiancé advised there was a sloth named Bandit that had been lying on the ground for approximately two days and required immediate assistance.

Ms. Dial observed Bandit was covered in fecal material around the face and believed this may have been related to dehydration and attempts by the animal to obtain moisture. Ms. Dial stated after evaluating the warehouse, she determined there was nothing additional that could be done onsite and the animals needed immediate transfer.

Ms. Dial described the Sloth World facility as extremely clean and appearing new. However, she stated the facility did not appear consistent with a location that had housed sloths for the length of time expected. She stated it appeared as though the facility had recently been renovated or the animals had recently been moved there. I informed Ms. Dial through FWC reports and other interviews the facility had been in operation for over a year.

Ms. Dial advised the cages were not appropriately sized according to AZA recommendations and that some husbandry items were inappropriate, including artificial leaves, because sloths may attempt to consume them. Ms. Dial explained that smaller cages, bare flooring, and reduced enrichment may

be acceptable temporarily during quarantine periods, which generally last approximately 30–45 days. She stated those conditions would not be appropriate for long-term housing.

Ms. Dial explained that many of the imported sloths likely arrived in poor condition due to problems occurring before exportation. She advised some export facilities remove young sloths from their mothers too early and feed inappropriate diets, including rice, to keep young animals quiet during transport. Ms. Dial stated these early-life issues can create long-term health problems, including digestive and microbiome issues.

Ms. Dial stated adult sloths generally have established microbiomes and are more likely to tolerate relocation; however, younger animals are significantly more vulnerable.

Ms. Dial discussed difficulties in evaluating starvation in sloths. She explained that traditional body condition scoring (BCS) and fat measurements used in other species are unreliable for sloths because their anatomy differs. Ms. Dial went on to state that sloths could have a full gastrointestinal tract and still be starving due to improper nutrition. She explained that evidence of food in the stomach does not necessarily indicate adequate feeding. Ms. Dial advised starvation in sloths is determined through evaluation of fat quality and overall condition rather than simply stomach contents.

Ms. Dial believed the Sloth World case appeared more consistent with an acute event rather than long-term starvation due to the decline occurring rapidly.

When asked whether she believed criminal neglect occurred, Ms. Dial stated the determination would depend on whether the individuals responsible had access to resources and whether they sought assistance.

Ms. Dial stated if Dr. Lane sought outside assistance and followed professional guidance, responsibility would shift toward others involved. She further stated Mr. Agresta had hired professionals, paid veterinary bills, and

submitted animals for diagnostic testing, making criminal responsibility difficult to assign to him.

Ms. Dial advised she had spent approximately one month reviewing the case to understand what might have occurred and to try and prevent similar incidents in the future.

Ms. Dial concluded her interview by stating she did not understand why Sloth World was permitted by FWC (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) to continue importing additional sloths after losing so many.

On June 18, 2026, I met with Dr. John Roberts, Head Pathologist for the Bronson Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (BADDL), regarding his examination and findings associated with multiple sloths submitted to BADDL from Sloth World.

Dr. Roberts was questioned regarding any commonality or correlation observed among the sloths examined by BADDL. Dr. Roberts advised that, during the later stages of testing, BADDL began investigating nutritional deficiencies and identified low copper levels in all tested sloths. Dr. Roberts explained that this finding was only included in the later reports and that the earlier reports had not been retroactively updated. Dr. Roberts advised BADDL to further investigate these findings and potentially publish their results.

Dr. Roberts stated that some of the sloths also exhibited vitamin A deficiencies, but the consistent finding among the tested animals was copper deficiency. Dr. Roberts advised that only four sloths had been specifically tested for copper levels because that connection was discovered later in the investigation.

Dr. Roberts was asked whether copper deficiency was likely a symptom of another underlying issue or what factors could cause such a deficiency. Dr. Roberts explained that sloths have a highly specialized diet and that animals captured from the wild may experience nutritional deficiencies if removed

from their natural environment or maintained without an appropriate diet for extended periods.

Dr. Roberts stated, *"The animals are captured in the wild. We do not know how long they're being held in a facility in Guyana or wherever. Sloths have a specialized diet and the minute they go off that diet, they're going to get mineral deficiencies."*

Dr. Roberts further stated that, from a prosecutorial standpoint, one challenge is that the animals may have arrived already compromised. Dr. Roberts stated, *"These animals came in sick. I mean I would testify to that."*

Dr. Roberts advised BADDL also identified multiple viral findings among the sloths examined. Specifically, Dr. Roberts stated several sloths tested positive for Gamma Herpes virus.

Dr. Roberts explained that the virus could potentially spread through comingling of animals. He advised he could not determine without reviewing specific records whether the Peruvian or Guyanese sloths were carrying the virus; however, he stated it was possible one group of imported sloths may have originated from a population that had not previously encountered the virus and therefore may have been more susceptible.

Dr. Roberts advised Gamma Herpes virus is considered endemic among sloths and stated the significance of the virus in this situation remains uncertain. He further stated the possibility exists that imported sloths introduced a virus into the United States population.

Dr. Roberts discussed findings of myelomalacia, described as softening or degeneration of the spinal cord, which he stated is not described in existing sloth literature. Dr. Roberts advised copper deficiency is known to cause similar spinal cord disease in sheep, but whether the same mechanism occurs in sloths is unknown. Dr. Roberts stated, *"Does it cause it in sloths? I don't know. I assume, it maybe does."*

Dr. Roberts explained that spinal cord dysfunction could contribute to an animal becoming emaciated because neurological impairment may interfere

with normal eating and bodily functions. He stated emaciation alone does not necessarily prove starvation or inadequate feeding because there can be multiple medical causes.

Dr. Roberts further explained copper deficiency can affect immune function, causing immunosuppression and allowing latent viruses, such as herpes viruses, to become clinically significant.

Dr. Roberts identified severe gastrointestinal dysfunction as a major factor contributing to the deaths of the sloths examined. Dr. Roberts explained that many of the sloths had severely enlarged stomachs, some described as approximately basketball-sized or larger. He stated the stomach enlargement eventually placed pressure on the lungs and contributed to respiratory compromise. Dr. Roberts advised the underlying issue appeared to involve impaired movement of food through the gastrointestinal tract. He explained sloths rely on complex microbial systems similar to ruminants, where microorganisms assist in digestion of plant material. Dr. Roberts stated, *"The main lesions on these and a good reason they die is their stomach quits moving."*

Dr. Roberts further explained that neurological dysfunction associated with spinal cord damage could interfere with stomach movement and digestion.

Dr. Roberts was asked whether his necropsy findings demonstrated evidence of inadequate care, neglect, or failure to provide food. Dr. Roberts stated, *"I wouldn't, no, I can't say that. No, I mean, it's the opposite. The food was killing them."*

Dr. Roberts explained that food accumulation in the stomach, rather than an absence of food, was observed because the digestive system not properly moving or processing the food.

Dr. Roberts advised that many of the findings observed in these sloths are not well documented in existing peer-reviewed literature. Specifically, Dr. Roberts stated there is limited information regarding copper deficiency in sloths and stated he did not believe copper deficiency had been established in

peer-reviewed sloth research. Dr. Roberts cautioned that online sources, including artificial intelligence-generated information, may not distinguish between peer-reviewed scientific findings and unsupported opinions.

Dr. Roberts was asked whether the sloths were already sick when they arrived in the United States. Dr. Roberts responded, "*Yes, these are chronic, they are chronic changes.*"

Dr. Roberts explained that several animals had pneumonia, which developed over several days to approximately a week; however, the primary chronic findings involved gastrointestinal bloating and associated diseases.

On June 6, 2026, I spoke with General Contractor Scott Kisling by telephone regarding his involvement with Sloth World. Mr. Kisling advised he performed contract work at Quarantine 1 for approximately 9–10 days during June or July 2025. Mr. Kisling stated his work involved raising the sloth enclosures using come-along tools and installing a three-foot wooden wall beneath the cages.

Mr. Kisling advised he and his employees had taken precautions to minimize stress in the sloths, including cutting wood and using tools outside in the parking lot to reduce noise inside the facility. He stated Mr. Bandre informed them the sloths were delicate animals and sensitive to stressors, and they were instructed to be quiet and careful while working.

Mr. Kisling stated he observed Mr. Bandre and the staff providing what appeared to be appropriate diets and proper care for the sloths. He advised he did not observe any signs of abuse or neglect and stated his observations were the opposite, describing Mr. Bandre and the staff as appearing to genuinely care about the animals and their overall wellbeing.

On June 19, 2026, I met with Sydnee Young, who is a Veterinarian Technician for Central Florida Zoo. Ms. Young advised Dr. Jennifer Lane had reached out to her for help learning about sloths. Ms. Young stated in her sworn, written statement that she asked Dr. James Bogan for information on sloths for a former co-worker (Dr. Lane). Ms. Young informed me Dr. Bogan had

recommended 2 websites to send to Dr. Lane and Ms. Young found 2 websites using google. Ms. Young further advised that was the end of her communication and did not receive any further questions from Dr. Lane.

It should be noted Dr. Lane provided me with a copy of the email send from Ms. Young, which was dated November 12, 2025, with 4 hyperlinks to the informative websites.

On June 12, 2026, I met with Ms. Laura Solan who was a former Manager/Animal Caretaker for Sloth World. Ms. Solan stated she was hired by Sloth World in July 2025 as an animal caretaker, promoted to manager in September 2025, and remained employed until April 2026. She described the facility's daily husbandry practices, stating that animal care was performed twice daily with all observations, feeding, and treatments documented in Google Sheets and on whiteboards.

Ms. Solan explained that the sloths were provided with a diet consisting of leafy greens, vegetables, hydroponic lettuce, natural browse (including copperleaf, tropical almond, hibiscus, and bamboo), as well as commercially prepared leaf-eater biscuits and sloth diet in limited quantities. She stated that food intake was recorded for each animal and that veterinary recommendations were documented and followed. Veterinary records were maintained as physical copies at the facility, and she identified Dr. Jennifer Lane, DVM, as the attending veterinarian.

According to Ms. Solan, hydration and medical treatment included oral fluids (Pedialyte) when possible, with subcutaneous (sub-Q) fluids administered to animals in critical condition. She stated medications were administered as directed by the veterinarian, either by subcutaneous or intramuscular injection. Ms. Solan also reported that Mr. Peter Bandre recommended the use of Pedialyte when she began working for the facility and that this guidance was utilized alongside veterinary recommendations. After Mr. Bandre's termination, she contacted Dr. Janet Sandi, a Veterinarian for the Toucan Ranch in Costa Rica, for additional husbandry assistance.

Ms. Solan further stated that some sloths arrived at the facility already in poor condition, exhibiting lethargy, weakness, anorexia, and dehydration, with some dying shortly after arrival despite treatment efforts. She reported that temperatures and body weights were obtained upon intake and monitored daily or as needed.

On June 16, 2026, Mr. Benjamin Agresta and Ms. Courtney Massam were interviewed regarding the operation of Sloth World, the importation and care of sloths, and the circumstances surrounding the deaths of numerous animals.

Mr. Agresta stated the concept for Sloth World originated after purchasing a pet sloth named "Brucey" from Mr. Peter Bandre, who later became Vice President of the company. According to Mr. Agresta, Mr. Bandre had approximately 35 years of experience importing and caring for sloths, had written a book on sloth husbandry, supplied sloths to zoos, and was regarded as the subject matter expert. Mr. Agresta stated he relied on Mr. Bandre's expertise in overseeing animal acquisition, importation, facility preparation, husbandry, and day-to-day animal care.

Mr. Agresta explained the business was originally intended for St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, but after import permits were denied, the project was relocated to Orlando. Due to Orlando's variable climate, the company invested significant funds converting an industrial warehouse into a climate-controlled indoor exhibit. Mr. Agresta stated Mr. Bandre selected the building, approved its suitability, chose subcontractors, oversaw installation of equipment, and had unrestricted authority to purchase upgrades using company funds. Mr. Agresta stated Mr. Bandre had access to company credit cards and repeatedly instructed him to make whatever improvements he believed necessary.

Regarding the facility, Mr. Agresta disputed claims that the building lacked electricity or water. He stated electrical service was continuously connected, the building was hardwired, and the reports claiming otherwise were inaccurate. Ms. Massam confirmed the building had running water and a

functioning sink. They acknowledged one garage bay door was known by both themselves and the landlord to be inoperable before occupancy.

When discussing the cold-weather incident, Mr. Agresta stated Mr. Bandre was responsible for monitoring the facility through remote temperature sensors and Blink camera systems. Mr. Agresta believed Mr. Bandre should have received alerts if temperatures or issues became unsafe. These technology protocols were set up after the initial incident. Although Mr. Agresta admitted he had no direct evidence; his theory is Mr. Bandre inadvertently left the middle garage door open or not properly closed, resulting in exposure to cold temperatures. Mr. Agresta informed me 2 of the garage doors had new door openers/closers, but the middle door was old and did not function properly. Mr. Agresta based this opinion on the absence of photographs or documentation from Mr. Bandre showing an equipment failure or temperature emergency. Ms. Massam stated neither she nor Mr. Agresta could confirm whether Mr. Bandre had opened the garage door or not.

Mr. Agresta described sloth digestion as highly temperature dependent, explaining that prolonged exposure to cold could disrupt the bacteria within the digestive tract, leading to starvation despite adequate food intake. He suggested this mechanism could explain some deaths following temperature fluctuations.

Mr. Agresta advised Mr. Bandre handled all importation paperwork and coordinated shipments through exporters in Guyana and later Peru. He stated all imported sloths were wild-caught because captive-bred sloths were unavailable for export. Mr. Agresta stated Sloth World requested adult animals meeting minimum weight requirements and did not want juveniles, but exporters sometimes shipped younger animals anyway. He further alleged that exporters occasionally separated mothers from babies to increase the number of animals exported.

Mr. Agresta acknowledged the three-toed sloths experienced high mortality but stated Mr. Bandre believed he had developed an appropriate diet using

fresh cecropia leaves. Mr. Agresta also referenced Mr. Bandre's prior involvement with three-toed sloths associated with the Dallas World Aquarium, noting that very few reportedly survived.

Mr. Agresta stated staff communicated directly with Mr. Bandre and veterinarian Dr. Jennifer Lane concerning animal health, treatments, and daily observations. Mr. Agresta stated he intentionally remained removed from husbandry operations because Mr. Bandre and Dr. Lane were the experts responsible for animal care. He described his own role as primarily handling business operations and financing, while Mr. Bandre directed husbandry. Mr. Agresta stated he was generally present at the quarantine facility only about once each week.

Mr. Agresta and Ms. Massam stated the company continually invested in facility improvements at Mr. Bandre's recommendation, including additional insulation, upgraded electrical systems, air filtration, ultraviolet systems, cameras, increased climate control through multiple mini-split air conditioners, humidification, and other environmental modifications. Mr. Agresta stated every improvement requested by Mr. Bandre was approved and funded.

Mr. Agresta and Ms. Massam emphasized that husbandry practices included weighed diets, monitoring food and water consumption, fecal scoring, individualized dietary plans, veterinary treatment protocols, and recordkeeping maintained by staff. They stated Dr. Jennifer Lane created individualized veterinary care plans, prescribed medications and dosages, established dietary requirements, and supervised Mr. Bandre's animal care responsibilities. Mr. Agresta stated all health concerns were reported directly to Mr. Bandre and Dr. Lane rather than himself.

Mr. Agresta stated that toward the end of Dr. Lane's employment, communication became delayed, citing an instance in which staff reportedly could not reach her for approximately two days.

Regarding medical treatments, Mr. Agresta and Ms. Massam stated the use of Pedialyte originated from recommendations by Toucan Rescue Ranch

personnel, including veterinarian Dr. Janet Sandi and founder Leslie Howle, who had visited Sloth World, evaluated the facility, performed ultrasounds on two sloths, and observed the treatment protocols. Mr. Agresta stated Pedialyte was routinely used by zoos and had been recommended for sloths.

Mr. Agresta stated Dr. Jennifer Lane informed him that other zoological facilities were experiencing similar illnesses, and that Bronson Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory was investigating an unidentified viral disease affecting sloths. Mr. Agresta stated he authorized continued diagnostic testing of deceased sloths to assist researchers in identifying the pathogen.

Mr. Agresta stated he ultimately decided to close Sloth World after an unidentified disease/virus could not be diagnosed or treated, and because future importation of sloths became more difficult following international CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) restrictions and subsequent state import limitations. He stated that after deciding to end operations, he contacted multiple accredited zoo institutions and Species Survival Plan Coordinator Debra Dial to arrange placement of the remaining animals.

Both Mr. Agresta and Ms. Massam denied any intentional mistreatment or neglect of the animals. They advised staff were meticulous in their husbandry practices and maintained that neither management nor employees intentionally harmed any sloth.

On July 1, 2026, I interviewed Dr. Jennifer Lane, DVM, regarding her role as the consulting veterinarian for Sloth World. It should be noted that Assistant State Attorney Fink with the Ninth Judicial Circuit had met with Dr. Jennifer Lane prior to my involvement in the case. Assistant State Attorney Fink met with Dr. Lane in reference to her involvement and insights into Sloth World. Assistant State Attorney Fink provided me with a printed transcript from that meeting.

Dr. Lane advised she was hired by Mr. Benjamin Agresta and Mr. Peter Bandre in August 2025 as a consulting veterinarian and resigned in mid-April 2026, with her final visit to the facility occurring on April 3, 2026. She

explained she had no prior experience with sloths when hired but sought guidance from recognized experts, veterinarians, scientific literature, and professional veterinary networks to establish appropriate standards of care.

Dr. Lane stated that most imported sloths died shortly after arriving. To address the unfamiliar species and issues, she consulted multiple recognized resources, including veterinarians at Toucan Ranch, Ms. Debra Dial of Science of Sloths, the Central Florida Zoo, the Veterinary Information Network (VIN), and available scientific research. She advised she intentionally relied on veterinary and wildlife experts rather than Mr. Peter Bandre's husbandry manual because it was not written by a veterinarian.

It should be noted that Dr. Lane's attorney emailed me documents/emails supporting Dr. Lane did reach out to specialist for guidance. The emails showed Dr. Lane reached out to Ms. Debra Dial on August 12, 2025, Veterinarian Technician from Central Florida Zoo on November 12, 2025, and a Sloth Vademecum information packet from The Toucan Rescue Ranch (unknown date).

Dr. Lane advised she visited Sloth World approximately once or twice each month and primarily communicated with Peter Bandre, Laura Solan, and the animal care staff. She stated the care team consistently followed her medical recommendations. The only recommendation she believed was not implemented involved installing ultraviolet (UV) lighting, which she considered important for exotic animal health. Although she was told UV lighting was being researched and samples had been obtained, the lights were never installed during her employment.

Dr. Lane consistently described the animal care staff as dedicated, hardworking, and attentive. She stated the staff cleaned and monitored the facility twice daily, separate morning and evening shifts to minimize stress, and closely monitored food intake and animal weights. She believed the husbandry practices were generally good and specifically stated she observed no evidence of abuse, neglect, malice, or gross negligence by any employee during the time she served as consultant.

Dr. Lane did identify several concerns. She believed Sloth World expanded too quickly by opening a second quarantine facility while still managing disease issues in the first quarantine building. She also noted occasional overuse of Pedialyte, although she described it more as a treat than a harmful practice and clarified flavored Pedialyte should not be used due to its sugar content. She further stated copper leaf was offered only as an occasional browse or treat and was not part of the regular diet. She denied the animals were ever fed brown rice at Sloth World, explaining that brown rice was associated with diets provided by exporting countries before importation.

Dr. Lane stated that, based on her observations, the majority of the mortality was attributable to conditions existing before the sloths arrived in the United States rather than deficiencies in care after arrival. She believed the first shipment was suffering from an infectious viral disease acquired prior to importation, with transport stress triggering clinical illness. She believed the second shipment largely suffered from nutritional deficiencies originating in their countries of origin. She also identified specific animals that should not have been transported due to poor body condition or medical issues, including juvenile animals and a pregnant female with retained placental tissue.

Dr. Lane discussed several medical conditions encountered during treatment, including dehydration, parasitic infections, bacterial infections, eye injuries, gastrointestinal disease, and bloat. She described the medications she prescribed, including subcutaneous fluids, antibiotics, antiparasitic medications, probiotics, Gas-X, and other supportive treatments. She explained treatment decisions were based on consultation with recognized experts, diagnostic testing, fecal examinations, bacterial cultures, and available research.

Dr. Lane advised that sloth body condition cannot be accurately assessed using traditional body condition scoring systems because no standardized scoring system exists for the species. She also explained that fecal testing revealed significant parasitic infections, including *Trichomonas*, which she described as potentially fatal if untreated. She stated Tinidazole was selected

as an alternative medication after researching its safety and similarity to unavailable standard treatments.

Dr. Lane stated that following Mr. Bandre's departure from Sloth World, expectations regarding her consulting role changed. She felt demands exceeded the responsibilities of a consulting veterinarian and advised staff to utilize emergency veterinary hospitals when immediate treatment was necessary. She also expressed concern that Sloth World misrepresented her role on its website despite her efforts to avoid being publicly represented as the facility's veterinarian.

Finally, Dr. Lane advised no one resisted her medical recommendations except regarding necropsies. She stated Mr. Agresta and/or Mr. Bandre wanted her to perform necropsies herself, but she refused and instead directed all deceased sloths to Bronson Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory for independent necropsy and diagnostic evaluation.

At the conclusion of my interview with Dr. Lane and my review of the information provided by ASA Fink, I found Dr. Lane's statement provided during this investigation to be consistent the testimony previously provided to ASA Fink.

Mr. Peter Bandre, former employee and former Vice President of Sloth World, was interviewed on July 7, 2026, regarding the importation, husbandry, veterinary care, and mortality of sloths maintained by Sloth World. Mr. Bandre was employed from January 1, 2025, through March 6, 2026, and stated he had over 10 years of experience importing and acclimating sloths, having personally cared for approximately 75 sloths before joining Sloth World.

Mr. Bandre explained that he met Mr. Benjamin Agresta after selling him a sloth from his former business, Incredible Pets, and later partnered with Mr. Agresta to develop the Sloth World concept. Although originally intended as a cruise excursion in the U.S. Virgin Islands, the project relocated to Orlando after permits were denied.

Mr. Bandre described the extensive regulatory process involving exporters, customs brokers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Customs and Border Protection, Homeland Security, CITES documentation, health certificates, and IATA shipping standards. He stated every shipment was inspected by U.S. Fish and Wildlife upon arrival before entering Florida, where Class III wildlife licensing and USDA requirements became applicable.

Mr. Bandre acknowledged that sloths imported from Peru experienced a high mortality and believed the problems originated before the animals arrived in the United States. He attributed the deaths to a combination of improper nutrition, poor exporter experience, shipping delays, temperature exposure during transport, dehydration, and later the discovery of Gamma Herpes Virus. Mr. Bandre stated Peru's exporters primarily specialized in tropical fish rather than mammals and believes the sloths may have contracted the virus through exposure to capybara during export operations. He stated Peru has since ceased exporting wildlife.

Mr. Bandre compared the Peru shipments with his previous importation experiences, stating his prior mortality rate had been extremely low due to him importing only a small number of juvenile sloths at a time. He advised Mr. Agresta elected to import much larger groups containing sloths of varying ages and sizes, which he believed increased the overall risks of mortality with importation.

Mr. Bandre described Sloth World's quarantine protocols, stating the facility maintained approximately 82-degree temperatures with 70% humidity, exceeded FWC enclosure size requirements, maintained browse and hydroponic food production, utilized Mazuri sloth diet supplemented with fresh produce, weighed food consumption, and maintained detailed husbandry records. He stated veterinary diet plans were individualized for each animal, and food intake was also calculated at approximately 10 percent of each animal's body weight.

Mr. Bandre identified Dr. Suzanne Billiar and later Dr. Jennifer Lane as the facility veterinarians, describing Dr. Lane as highly responsive and actively

involved in reviewing husbandry records and animal health updates. Mr. Bandre emphasized that all medical treatments required veterinary authorization and that Sloth World maintained extensive documentation in anticipation of USDA licensure, including feeding records, veterinary recommendations, medications, fecal monitoring, hydration records, and husbandry checklists.

Mr. Bandre stated his responsibilities were limited to overseeing husbandry practices, ensuring staff followed veterinary protocols, maintaining regulatory compliance, and preparing the facility for USDA inspection. He stated all veterinary recommendations, including the routine use of oral Pedialyte for hydration during quarantine, were implemented exactly as directed.

Mr. Bandre repeatedly stated he never believed the sloth deaths resulted from neglect or inadequate husbandry. Instead, he maintained the mortality event resulted from factors occurring before importation, including improper overseas care, transportation stress, temperature exposure, dehydration, and Gamma Herpes Virus infection. He stated necropsy findings demonstrating significant diseases shortly after arrival supported this.

Mr. Bandre reported that Mr. Agresta consistently approved expenditures on animal care and never refused requests for equipment, supplies, veterinary care, or facility improvements. Mr. Bandre stated that if he could change anything, he would have preferred constructing an outdoor quarantine facility rather than an indoor operation, although he did not believe this would have prevented the mortality event.

Mr. Bandre advised he was shocked by the death experienced at Sloth World, describing it as unlike anything he had encountered during his previous importation career. He stated he believed many of the veterinary interventions merely prolonged the lives of the sloths that had already suffered irreversible disease or injury prior to importation.

Mr. Bandre stated he did not resign because of concerns involving animal care. Instead, he explained his employment ended after he rejected a proposed employment contract that did not include the co-ownership interest he claimed

had previously been promised by Mr. Agresta. Following his refusal to sign the agreement, Mr. Bandre advised Mr. Agresta terminated his employment.

Mr. Bandre concluded that Peru should no longer be considered a viable source for imported sloths and recommended future importations consist of smaller shipments from established exporters in Guyana. He also praised FWC Inspector Rick Brown's thorough inspections and stated Sloth World consistently complied with regulatory requirements. When asked directly whether he had ever observed abuse, neglect, or failures to follow veterinary recommendations, Mr. Bandre clearly responded that he had never witnessed abuse or neglect and stated Sloth World followed veterinary recommendations *"100 percent."*

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, based upon the information obtained throughout the course of this investigation, including the review of facility records, veterinary documentation, inspection records, environmental monitoring records, animal care procedures and diagnostic findings, and the provided photographs and videos, it is reasonable to conclude that the mortality event involving the transported two-toed and three-toed sloths was the result of multiple contributing factors affecting the overall health and survivability of the animals.

The investigation concluded that Sloth World personnel provided ongoing care and monitoring of the animals, including documentation of food and water consumption, environmental management through temperature and humidity controls, routine observation, and access to veterinary services. Records reviewed during the investigation indicated the facility maintained required standards and remained in compliance with applicable state inspection requirements.

The veterinary and diagnostic information reviewed during the investigation, as well as expert veterinary testimony identified significant medical

conditions affecting the deceased animals, including systemic disease processes involving respiratory, gastrointestinal, nutritional, and metabolic systems. The findings were consistent with a complex health-related event involving multiple stressors associated with the capture, transportation, acclimation, and continued care of a highly specialized species.

During the course of the investigation, no evidence was discovered indicating intentional harm, abuse, criminal neglect, failure to provide necessary care, or any deliberate act or omission by facility personnel that contributed to the deaths of the animals as required by Florida State Statutes.

Based on the totality of the evidence collected and reviewed, the circumstances surrounding the mortality event appear to be consistent with a multifactorial animal health incident rather than the result of criminal activity or improper care. Therefore, this investigation has concluded with no further investigative action warranted at this time.

All investigative documentation, supporting records, and findings were uploaded into Evidence.com in accordance with agency policy and applicable retention requirements.

ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
CASE NUMBER 26-026517
EID 9626

REFERRED TO:

The case was referred to State Attorney's Office

D/S Aaron Bennett

Deputy Aaron Bennett, EID 9626
Agricultural Crimes Unit

08/18/2026

(date)

Sworn to and subscribed before me, the undersigned Authority, this
18 day of August, 2026. X Law Enforcement Officer

Sgt. Jeremy Bint

Sergeant Jeremy Bint
Supervisor, Agricultural Crimes

8/18/26

(date)

In compliance with Orange County Sheriff's Office Written Directives, and Florida Statute 119, the completed investigative report becomes public record unless exempt from disclosure by law. Requests for review and/or copies of completed investigations are granted in accordance with applicable law.