



Inspection Report

State Of Florida Dept Of ENV Protection
4150 S. Suncoast Blvd.
Homosassa State Wildlife Park
Homosassa, FL 34446

Customer ID: **3116**
Certificate: **58-C-0412**
Site: 001
HOMOSASSA SPRINGS PARK

Type: ROUTINE INSPECTION
Date: 10-JUN-2025

3.101(a)(1) Direct

Facilities, general.

The current housing facility for the three manatees "Betsy", "Ariel", and "Heinz" is not restricting the entrance of unwanted animals or protecting the manatees from injury. During the inspection, APHIS officials witnessed a sheepshead fish biting a wound measuring ~3" by 4" on the right side of Betsy, causing bleeding from the wound and causing her to flinch. This fish continued to swim around Betsy and pick at the wound. Both Betsy and Ariel were seen with multiple lesions on their sides and top side of their tails. Betsy's wounds consist of two roughly circular areas on the left flank, one measuring ~5-6" in diameter, and one located more towards the head measuring 2-3" in diameter; one oval area on the right flank measuring ~3" by 4"; one circular area on the right middle side measuring ~2" in diameter; and one irregular area on the tail measuring ~7x10". Ariel's wounds consist of one kidney bean shaped area on the left flank measuring ~2" by 4"; two areas on the right flank, one measuring ~2" by 5", and one located more towards the head measuring ~2" in diameter; and three irregularly shaped areas on the tail, one measuring ~5" by 7", and two measuring ~3-5". These lesions are indented with skin missing and are white in color with spots of red due to blood. The wounds on Ariel's and Betsy's tails are also surrounded by excessive and thickened white to grey tissue, ranging in size from 1-3" in width, and approximately 1-2" in height. According to records and animal care staff, Heinz also has wounds from fish bites. The records also indicate that the manatees are showing behaviors such as eating in different places and holding their tails out of the water in order to avoid the fish. According to the manatee veterinarian, the wounds have been unable to heal due to continued biting from the sheepshead fish. The manatee veterinarian further commented that the cool water (74F) is impeding wound healing.

Approximately two weeks ago (end of May, 2025), the facility added 1" x 1" mesh at the perimeter fencing below the bridge to help exclude the sheepshead fish; facility staff also translocated approximately 5 of the sheepshead fish to an area away from the manatees. Roughly 10 sheepshead fish remain present and trapped in the primary enclosure housing the manatees. Animal care staff and the manatee veterinarian report that the mesh and primary enclosure fencing do not exclude smaller pinfish, which have been seen biting the thickened tissue around the open wounds.

Allowing unwanted animals access to animal enclosures can lead to pain, discomfort, and ongoing injury. Housing facilities for marine mammals must be structurally sound and must be maintained in good repair to protect the animals from injury, to contain the animals within the facility, and to restrict the entrance of unwanted animals. To be corrected by close of business on June 13, 2025.

Prepared By: KATIE PRICE

USDA, APHIS, Animal Care

Date:

11-JUN-2025

Title: VETERINARY MEDICAL
OFFICER

Received by Title: Facility Representative

Date:

11-JUN-2025



Inspection Report

A complete routine inspection was conducted starting on June 10, 2025. This inspection report is limited to the Direct non-compliance identified during that inspection. An additional inspection report will be delivered with the other issues identified during this inspection.

This inspection was conducted with facility representatives. The exit briefing was conducted on June 11, 2025, with a facility representative.

Additional Inspectors:

Jessica Siegal-Willott

Prepared By: KATIE PRICE
USDA, APHIS, Animal Care

Title: VETERINARY MEDICAL
OFFICER

Date:
11-JUN-2025

Received by Title: Facility Representative

Date:
11-JUN-2025



Species Inspected

Cust No	Cert No	Site	Site Name	Inspection
3116	58-C-0412	001	HOMOSASSA SPRINGS PARK	10-JUN-2025

Count	Scientific Name	Common Name
000003	<i>Trichechus manatus</i>	CARIBBEAN MANATEE
000003	Total	