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August 16, 2007

The Honorable Nancy Wieben Stock
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

RE: "Orange County Zoos"

Dear Presiding Judge Wieben Stock:

This letter is in response to the 2006-2007 Orange County Grand Jury report, "Orange County Zoos." In particular, the City of Santa Ana was asked to respond to Finding 1 and Recommendation 1.

Finding F-1: The Santa Ana Zoo has no formal written training plan for zoo keepers. It relies on the ability to get the new employees trained either by existing staff and/or the courses/seminars offered by the AZA. This could lead to problems in the proper care and feeding of the animals if the key staff were to leave.

Response: The City of Santa Ana agrees with the first statement in this finding, and disagrees with the balance of this finding. Although the Santa Ana Zoo does not have a formal written training plan for keepers, the Zoo does have a written keeper training manual and a training plan outline for probationary keepers at both the family farm and main zoo locations. With respect to animal care, the Grand Jury should be aware that all of the keeper positions at the Santa Ana Zoo have prior animal experience and educational requirements as part of the minimum qualifications to be eligible for hire. These measures, along with our in-service training and supervision by senior and-curatorial staff, ensure consistent quality care for the animals in our collection.

Recommendation R-1: That Santa Ana Zoo Management develops a formal written zookeepers' training plan.

Response: This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but is scheduled for completion within the next 90 days.

Your comments and concerns for the care of animals at the Santa Ana Zoo, as well as those at the Orange County Zoo are appreciated and you are to be congratulated for your diligence and thoroughness of your investigation.

Sincerely,

Gerardo Mouet
Executive Director
Parks, Recreation and Community Services Agency