

Danish animal welfare group backs zoo's giraffe killing

February 11 2014



This handout photo released on February 11, 2014 shows a veterinarian making an open to public autopsy on giraffe Marius on February 9, 2014 at a zoo in Copenhagen

Denmark's largest animal welfare charity said Tuesday it supported a Copenhagen zoo's decision to kill a healthy giraffe and feed it to lions in front of children.

"We trust that the very well educated experts at Copenhagen Zoo have

explored the possibilities of placing the giraffe in another [zoo](#)," said Tina Engberg, the spokeswoman for Dyrens Beskyttelse, a group that runs animal shelters and wildlife care centres across the country.

"A lot of zoos have extensive breeding programmes and contribute greatly to knowledge dissemination," she added.

According to its website, the organisation provides "practical help for [animals](#) in distress".

"You can also find bad zoos, but Copenhagen Zoo is one of those that is part of international breeding work," Engberg said.

Some animal protection groups have made statements about the killing of Marius, the 18-month-old giraffe, without having all the facts, she claimed.

"There are lots of other situations where animal populations are regulated," she said, citing Scandinavian moose hunting and British rabbit hunting.

Zoo staff in Copenhagen received death threats after Marius was put down on Sunday despite thousands signing an online petition to save him.

The animal was later skinned and dissected in front of visitors, many of whom were children.

But many Danes have been surprised and even angered by international reactions to the event.

A video of the zoo's scientific director Bengt Holst putting a British news presenter "in his place" went viral in Denmark on Tuesday.

"Give a prize to that man," one magazine wrote.

The zoo has said it had no choice other than to prevent the animal attaining adulthood, since under European Association of Zoos and Aquaria rules, inbreeding between giraffes is to be avoided.

The Yorkshire Wildlife Park said it was "saddened" to hear that the animal had been killed, after contacting the Copenhagen zoo on Saturday to adopt Marius.

But the Danish zoo turned down the offer, saying the wildlife park should give its space to a "genetically more important" [giraffe](#).

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Citation: Danish animal welfare group backs zoo's giraffe killing (2014, February 11) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-02-danish-animal-welfare-group-zoo.html>

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