

http://www.fox23news.com/news/topstories/story.aspx?content_id=26A87E67-774C-4B19-98C7-73ADA36ED584

WXXA-TV
July 18, 2006

Tiger Scratches 4-year-old Boy

There were some scary moments at opening night of the Saratoga County Fair. **A 4-year old boy is recovering after a tiger at one of the exhibits there clawed him on the head.** But luckily that boy will be okay.

Two tigers from the **Ashville Game Farm** in Greenwich New York draw a lot of attention at the Saratoga County Fair. But they're drawing even more tonight after this **white tiger clawed four year old Riley Willard on the head.** Laurie Wells of Stillwater witnessed the whole thing. She described to us by phone tonight the panic that happened there.

Wells said, "My daughter screamed before she even saw it...When the paw came down on his head. It looked liked he tried to pull out and he got pulled back."

We spoke with Willard's Mother, Jennifer, earlier. **She tells us her son was sitting on this bench which was right next to the cage. He was having his photo taken while holding a baby kangaroo. When she says the tiger reached out and scratched her son on the forehead.**

Wells said, "The mother is the one who came in. I did not see any reaction from the people who own those animals."

Dick Rowland said, "We're very safety conscious. We have insurance walkthroughs. We spend a lot of time making sure that people are safe."

When we were able to take pictures of the tiger exhibit tiger owner Jeff Ash had already moved the bench and the fence farther away from the cage. He tells us he's sorry about the incident.

Fair General Manager Dick Rowland tells us they immediately took steps after this happened.

Rowland said, "We've since moved the bench away from the cage and we're actually the game farm is installing extra safety fence."

Wells said, "I know it's opening day, but that security should have been there beforehand."

You may remember these animals came from the same game farm that a similar tiger escaped from back in November.

In this incident the DEC and Department of Agriculture investigated performing rabies tests that came back negative.

Four-year old Riley Willard was taken to St. Peter's Hospital with that one inch cut and is expected to be okay.

<http://www.timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=500910&category=REGION&newsdate=7/19/2006>

Tiger takes swipe at boy

Photo with kangaroo at Saratoga County Fair turns into a slight injury for child

By [KENNETH C. CROWE II](#) , [CHRISTEN DEMING](#) and [KEN THURMAN](#), Staff reports

First published: Wednesday, July 19, 2006

BALLSTON SPA -- A 4-year-old child posing a photo with a baby kangaroo was slightly injured at the Saratoga County Fair Tuesday when a white Bengal tiger reached one of its paws through a cage and swiped the boy across the forehead.

Riley Willard of Ballston Spa received a small cut on the front of his head, county fair officials said. He was treated by the fair emergency medical services, based adjacent to the tiger cage, and taken by the Ballston Spa Community Ambulance Corps to St. Clare's Hospital in Schenectady, where the child was treated and released.

"It all happened very fast," said the boy's grandmother, who did not give her name in a phone interview. The boy lives with his mother, Jennifer Willard.

"We paid \$10 for him to get his picture taken sitting by a baby kangaroo, which was right next to the tiger cage," the grandmother said. "The cage wires had holes that were too big, and its paw was able to get through and brush his head."

The big cat's owner, Jeff Ash of Ashville Game Farm and Exotic Zoo, in Greenwich, Washington County, said the tiger -- **a female weighing hundreds of pounds -- moved a temporary barrier enough to reach through the cage and use its paw to feel around.**

"The cat apparently saw the kangaroo and pushed its paw through and while feeling around accidentally scratched the kid on top of his forehead with one of its paws," Ash said.

The tiger was one of two in display at the fair, Ash said. Both tigers could be seen sleeping in their cages Tuesday night as fair goers watched them.

Ash said he had no plans to take the cats out of the fair unless directed. He said he had not been cited as of Tuesday evening.

Dick Rowland, the fair general manager, said the incident was completely unexpected. As a result of the tiger, **named Calcutta**, reaching out through the cage's screening, the bench on which the boy was sitting for his picture was moved to a different location. The tiger cage was moved further back.

"It's certainly not something we wanted to see happen. The tiger is laying there for the most part," Rowland said.

The fair contacted the state and federal agencies responsible for exotic animals and fairs to inform them. This was the second year that the Ashville Game Farm has been at the fair, Rowland said.

The incident will be included in the annual review of the fair's activities, Rowland said. In addition, he said, the fair may have to complete an examination of state Department of Environmental Conservation guidelines for such animals.

This is the second time the Ashville Game Farm's tigers have been in the news in two years. In 2005, Tahan, a rare golden tabby tiger, escaped and wandered around Washington County for two hours before it was captured.

Ash said he and his wife, Mary, have been raising animals for close to 10 years. In addition to the tigers, he said he also owns other animals such as lions, bears and alligators. In all he estimated he has about 100 animals on his game farm located at 468 Lick Springs Road, Greenwich.

At the fair, meanwhile, it was business as usual.

Visitors crammed pavilions to watch talent shows, healthy-cooking demonstrations and the judging for the pie baking contest.

"We have a lot of exhibits that are under shelter," said Susan Farnsworth, media relations coordinator for the fair. She said fans have been set up in the buildings to keep visitors cool.

The 165th Saratoga County Fair features everything from a midway with games and rides, to animal exhibits including longhorn steers, reindeer and llamas, to food for any palate.

Out of the sun, visitors converged in the Townley Building after the pie judging and snacked on the leftovers.

Beating the heat was first-time fair visitor, Bruno, a brown bear with Welde's Big Bear Show. Bruno, along with seven other bears, were kept in a 68-degree tent until performance time. While in the heat, the bears could take a dip in their portable pool.

Welde's Big Bear Show, based out of Myakka City, Fla., debuted at the Saratoga County Fair in 1955 with Johnny Welde Sr., whose grandson showed the bears this year.

Farnsworth said attendance numbers for Tuesday weren't available, but fair officials expect at least 80,000 to walk through the gates through Sunday. She said the fair's first day is always a learning day.

"We're still finding things that need to be done," said Farnsworth. It's going well though."

The Saratoga County Fair runs from 9 a.m. to midnight, daily until Sunday. Writer Bob Gardinier contributed to this story.

fundamentals
What: Saratoga County Fair
When: 9 a.m. to midnight through Sunday
Where: Saratoga County Fairgrounds, Prospect Street, Ballston Spa
Cost: \$7, general admission today through Thursday; \$10, Friday through Sunday; \$3, children 6-10; free for children under 6; today is senior citizen day -- ages 65 and up pay \$4 until 5 p.m.
Info: <http://www.saratoga-county-fair.org>; or 885-9701

All Times Union materials copyright 1996-2006, Capital Newspapers Division of The Hearst Corporation, Albany, N.Y.

http://www.troyrecord.com/site/printerFriendly.cfm?brd=1170&dept_id=7021&newsid=169438
[50](#)



07/20/2006

Boy doing fine after tiger gets wild

By: Kevin Goodwin , Special to the Record

Riley Willard was getting his picture taken with a baby kangaroo at the Asheville Game Farm's booth at the Saratoga County Fair when the white Bengal tiger reached through the bars of its cage and swiped his forehead.

Dick Rowland, director of the county fair, said **Willard received 14 stitches** and seemed to be doing well.

A DEC officer responded to Tuesday afternoon's incident within minutes and measures were taken to ensure it wouldn't happen again, Rowland said.

The game farm changed the orientation of the cage and added more space between the cage and barrier fencing.

Jeff Ash, owner of the game farm, said the barriers were moved 4 feet away from the cage, so it can't be reached at all.

The fair exhibit includes two tigers and a baby kangaroo.

Ash said all the necessary officials have checked out the exhibit, and the game farm was given the OK to remain at the fair. Ash has exhibited at the fair for the past four years.

In November of last year, the Asheville Game Farm had another scare when a rare, 250-pound tabby-colored tiger named Tehan escaped through the ceiling of the farm's facility in Greenwich.

"This is the first time anything like that happened," Rowland said.

He said the incident didn't seem to deter people from visiting the tiger display.

"There were a lot of people at the exhibit this morning," he said.