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Answer given by Mr Várhelyi
on behalf of the European Commission
(20.10.2025)

The Commission does not have any information on the extent of these practices in European zoos mentioned by the Honourable Member. Council Directive 1999/22/EC¹ requires Member States to set up licencing and inspection systems ensuring that zoos implement conservation measures, including by accommodating their animals under conditions satisfying the biological and conservation requirements of the individual species. The Directive does not lay down any specific requirements in relation to the nutritional programme, nor does it regulate the management of surplus animals. Euthanasia of animals and possible feeding to predators falls under national ethical and animal welfare rules.

Harmonised EU rules on use of animal by-products related to special feeding purposes for, among others, zoo animals², provide that the use of animal by-products for special feeding purposes may only be authorised by the competent authorities under conditions which ensure the control of risks to public and animal health, and provided that the animal by-products in question come from animals which were not killed or did not die as a result of the presence or suspected presence of a disease communicable to humans or animals. Therefore, any such practice must comply with those EU rules to protect public and animal health, under authorisation by the competent authorities, by way of derogation from the baseline animal by-products rules.

The current EU rules on animal welfare of kept animals do not apply to animals kept in zoos and the Commission does not foresee to include these animals in the planned revision of the EU animal welfare legislation. Nevertheless, Member States can legislate in this area.

¹ Council Directive of 29 March 1999 relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos. 1999/22/EC. (OJ L 94, 9.4.1999, p. 24).

² See Article 18 of Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009, Articles 13 and 14 of Commission Regulation (EU) No 142/2011 and subsequent Annexes referred therein.