

177 Deer Destroyed at Japanese Village

Animals Killed After Showing Reactions to Tuberculosis Test

Lethal injections were administered Tuesday to 177 of the 320 deer at Japanese Village in Buena Park because they showed signs of tuberculosis.

The remainder of the herd will be destroyed next week because no buyer could be found, according to park officials who last week announced they were closing Japanese Village because it had been unprofitable.

Ned DeWitt, president of Six Flags, Inc., which owns the park, said the diseased animals were destroyed on orders from the state Bureau of Animal Health.

"They were destroyed as humanely as possible," he said. "This is a shock to me but we were instructed to put the deer to sleep because some of them were showing a positive reaction to tuberculosis."

However, Dr. Hyman Parrell, veterinarian in charge of the Bureau of Animal Health's Los Angeles office, said in a telephone interview Tuesday that the state had not ordered the animals destroyed.

Parrell said about 200 deer were ordered quarantined about a year ago after the animals reacted positively to TB tests. Only the healthy portion of the herd remained on public display.

"There was talk of treating the infected animals with antituberculosis drugs, but it turned out to be too expensive," Parrell said.

Six Flags said in its closing announcement last week wildlife would be properly cared for at the park until new homes could be found.

Buena Park Mayor Stanley Meyer told a press conference outside the village security gate that "this is an appalling situation, abominable

Later, he said, "In my opinion this is a contrived situation—a means to an end. To me the cost of feeding the animals reached a point where it was no longer economical to feed them."

Veterinarian Martin R. Dinnes, a consultant for the village and the

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man who injected the deer, said the "deer would have had the same fate if the park had remained open."

He said he had been trying for months to sell the "highly unsalable" deer and that it would be unsafe to try to move them. About 220 of the 320 park deer tested positive on TB, he said.

At the same conference, DeWitt said the park management had failed to find a buyer for the healthy portion of the herd after repeated attempts.

Parrell said there was no significant chance that any humans had contracted TB from diseased animals at the park because they had been isolated and because "it would take constant, frequent, close contact."

The deer have been a main attraction at the park, which opened in 1958. On Dec. 3, Six Flags announced it was closing the park because of "shrinking attendance and continued unprofitability."

Situated on 30 acres near Disneyland and Knotts Berry Farm, Japanese Village was purchased by Six Flags in 1970.

Exotic birds, bears, fish and dogs were on display but these animals apparently showed no signs of tuberculosis.