

Warwick's complete letter to Beyoncé follows.

25 August, 2006

Beyoncé Knowles
c/o Yvette Noel-Schure
Sony Music
550 Madison Ave., 26th floor
New York, NY 10022

Dear Ms. Knowles,

As a specialist in reptile biology and welfare I'm concerned about your posing with a terrified baby alligator for your new album cover. Humans and alligators are not natural bedfellows, and the two should not mix at events such as photo-shoots. In my view, doing so is arguably abusive to an animal.

According to reports, the animal had his mouth taped shut, and you noted that he was so frightened and defenceless that he relieved himself all over the set. Any restraint at all inherently deprives the animal of instinctual means of avoiding unwanted attention. By taping his mouth closed, this alligator was very exposed to his captor (you) and other surrounding threats with no way of evading the predicament.

I can understand why, despite assurances from animal handlers, you would be concerned about being in close proximity to a wild animal. Even a young alligator can bite when provoked. Few people realise that even holding a wild animal (whether captive-bred or wild-caught) is often a major stressor for them. In nature, an animal will be pursued and quickly caught or escape. Animals won't be held in their predators' arms for protracted periods of time while being stripped of all defenses. There is no scientific question as to whether alligators are capable of feeling pain and sensitivity to stress—they are, just as you are.

Alligators are rarely aggressive to people unless they are forced to be. They do, however, carry bacteria that can cause serious infection in humans. This is yet another reason for not using them for photo-shoots. Humans have historically treated alligators badly. Skin and meat traders in the US continue to do so by ranching them and slaughtering them via slices through their

spinal cords or bludgeoning them with hammers. The 'lucky' ones get shot. The alligator you handled probably faces this same end, after a life of confinement in captivity. It seems a great pity that this animal's problems should be added to in the course of promoting your own work.

I should hope that, on reflection and consideration of these wild animals' natural needs, you would opt from now on to leave wild animals in the wild.

Regards,

Clifford Warwick, PGDipPHC(Med), FIBiol