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Cecil the Lion Death: Animal Protection Leader and Former Actor & Reporter Charges Trophy Hunting Should be Illegal; Cites Loss of Tourism Income for Poor African Nations

LOS ANGELES, CA – A former actor and television news reporter today slammed "macho hunters" – like the Minnesota dentist who slaughtered Cecil the lion – as criminals, and said the incident is similar in scope to the infamous Michael Vick's prosecution for dog fighting and should lead to the criminalization of trophy killing.

Chris DeRose, president of the international animal protection group Last Chance for Animals (LCA), appeared for years on the syndicated news shows "Hard Copy," "A Current Affair" and "Inside Edition."

DeRose – who said that his Los Angeles-based organization has had more direct confrontations with hunters than almost any other animal protection group – has also confronted actors Gerald McRaney and Kurt Russell for so-called trophy "hunting."

"This kind of trophy killing is not only illegal, cowardly, inhumane and unethical, but these 'macho hunters' are depriving future generations in Africa the opportunity to earn a living in tourism, and prohibiting children around the world from experiencing these majestic creatures in their natural habitat," said DeRose, who said he has "hunted" African animals for years with a camera.

"No animals equals no tourism, and no income in poor African nations that rely heavily on tourist dollars. In Uganda and Rwanda, gorilla trekking is the main source of national income. Take that income away and those countries would suffer a tremendous economic blow. Many countries with animal safaris are dependent on revenue from tourism.

"Why should so many people suffer for just a few sick inadequate individuals? The death of Cecil has brought the magnitude of this kind of slaughter to a new level of discussion in the same manner Michael Vick brought dog fighting to the forefront of that discussion.

"We must stand up as a society and put a stop to all of this: Trophy and canned hunts must be illegal. Governments need to crack down once and for all for the survival of the animals, the people who depend on tourism and the nations as a whole. These hunters are the same types who have destroyed the American Indian and other indigenous peoples around the world, and have caused beautiful species of animals to become extinct. It has to stop. Everyone pays for it except the elite few," urged DeRose.

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Last Chance for Animals (LCA) is an international non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating animal exploitation through education, investigations, legislation, and public awareness campaigns. Since its formation in 1984, LCA has succeeded as one of the nation's pioneer animal advocacy organizations. LCA's Sam Simon Special Investigations Unit documents abuse in research labs, puppy mills, factory farms, and the entertainment industry, and works with prosecutors to put animal abusers behind bars. For more information please visit <http://www.lcanimal.org>.