

**BREAKING**

50 MIN AGO

## **Tahoe bear shooter may face criminal investigation**

NEWS | BAY AREA & STATE

# **SF evicts Golden Gate Park corral operator amid animal cruelty allegations**

By **Madilynne Medina**, *News Reporter*

May 30, 2024





≡ **SFGATE**

[Newsletters](#)

[Sign in](#)

San Francisco evicted a horseback riding service provider from Golden Gate Park and Camp Mather earlier this month after accusations of animal cruelty and overworking its employees.

[Watch More](#)


# SFGATE

The company, Chaparral Ranch, was notified on May 15 by the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department that its permit was revoked. The department evicted the company because it gained a “deeper understanding around the care of Chaparral’s operations,” Tamara Aparton, a spokesperson for the agency, told SFGATE in an email statement.

Chaparral, which has operated in the San Francisco park since 2019, was given 10 days to vacate and has now been gone for nearly a week, Aparton said. The department is looking for a new horseback riding service at Camp Mather, a summer camp near Yosemite operated by the city.

### ADVERTISEMENT

Article continues below this ad



**Our commitment to...**

Our commitment to tomorrow starts today. Discover Moncler...

Sponsored By **Moncler** [Learn More](#)

“Whether we will have horseback riding there in time for campers to enjoy depends on how the search goes,” Aparton said.

The company also provides horseback riding in Monterey Bay, Woodside, Los Gatos and Milpitas. As of Tuesday, the company website does not list San Francisco.

The move to pull Chaparral's permit came two days before a San Francisco Standard investigation revealed the allegations of mistreatment, with former employees telling the outlet that Chaparral was "really unethical." In a 41-page whistleblower report filed in 2021, several anonymous former employees wrote that the horses were being overworked and neglected.

"In my time as an employee, I have seen more injuries to horses than at any other facility I have seen and a lack of timely response by the owners," one employee wrote in the report.

When asked about the animal abuse allegations, Sue Pennell, founder and chief financial officer for Chaparral, told SFGATE that the company was cleared 14 times by San Francisco Animal Care & Control.

"Unfortunately that's really all I have to say is that the animal control came out 14 times and gave us a clean bill of health," Pennell said before hanging up the phone.

Deb Campbell, a spokesperson for Animal Care & Control, confirmed to SFGATE that the agency received complaints about Chaparral. She said on "several occasions," animal control officers had the company make "corrections/changes."

It's unclear what these changes were, but Campbell said the complaints were closed when and if the company was "in compliance with the law."

**ADVERTISEMENT**

Article continues below this ad

Aparton said the parks department said it still decided to revoke Chaparral's permit despite it passing its inspections.

"While an Animal Care & Control investigation determined Chaparral met the minimum standards for horse care under the law, we no longer believe they met the high standards we expect from our park operators," she said.

The whistleblower report against Chaparral alleged several instances of abuse at the Golden Gate Park facility, including that the horses were exhausted and sleep deprived. It also included photos of horses who were observed having a sleep-

deprived posture and being confined to cramped and unsanitary stalls with improper sleeping conditions.

Employees also detailed concerns in the report about the limited shelter for the horses, alleging that the animals spent most of the working day in the sun without breaks or water. And if it were to rain, the report said riders would still be able to pursue their lessons, with some of the animals developing "rain rot" and fungal infections from being left outside.

**ADVERTISEMENT**

Article continues below this ad

Other photos showed horses with saddle sores (the report alleged that employees were not trained to fit saddles) and grown out hooves because of a lack of trimming (resulting in the horses tripping). Employees also alleged that horses lacked proper health care because Chaparral did not have a vet for its San Francisco location.

According to the complaint, the company added numerous events in 2021, overworking the horses and employees. There were no regulations for how much a horse could be used, employees said.

Some employees told management about their concerns regarding the workload, the report said, but supervisors allegedly continued to add more lessons and rides to camp schedules. The complaint included recommendations for each individual horse and improvements to the overall site.

#### ADVERTISEMENT

Article continues below this ad

Some community members, including those that have knowledge about training horses, also voiced concerns about the conditions for the animals. A [February 2020 email to Animal Control](#), obtained by the Standard, has one complaint with photographic evidence from a community member who said the horses were neglected in unsanitary conditions and ungroomed.

Aparton said the parks department plans on searching for a new horseback riding service in June and will have “more safeguards in place.”

## BEST OF SFGATE

**Local** | [Here's why so many SF homes have sinks in the bedrooms](#)

**Obscure** | [The strange tower with no address on Telegraph Hill](#)

**Travel** | [This is the most otherworldly sunrise hike of any Calif. park](#)

**Unsolved** | [Woman found dead in Yosemite linked to cult leader, serial killer](#)

May 30, 2024



**Madilynne Medina**  
NEWS REPORTER



Madilynne Medina is a news reporter for SFGATE. She is an alumna of San Jose State where she served as executive editor for the "Spartan Daily." She is also a Bay Area native. Email her at [madilynne.medina@sfgate.com](mailto:madilynne.medina@sfgate.com)

***Selected stories:***

[This Oakland gas station is going viral for its nonstop car burglaries](#)

[The urban legend that won't die on this deadly Bay Area highway](#)

[Will UC Merced ever grow out of its guaranteed admission programs?](#)

[Downtown Oakland businesses 'surprised' by Kaiser's warning to workers](#)

[‘It’s not going to be enough for people’: CalFresh benefits slashed](#)

[Bad Bunny goes full-on Western in his first 'Most Wanted' San Francisco show](#)

## Around The Web

Powered by **REVCONTENT**

**Try Not to Gag When You See Barron's Girlfriend**

By Life Style Chatter

**Leak "Defense" Water Strengthens Bladder Muscles**

By NativePath

**MD: If You Have Dark Spots, Do This Immediately (It's Genius!)**

By GundryMD



**Swelling Due to Edema? Use This New Device to Help Drain Edema Fluid**

By Health Insight Journal

**New Edema Device Stuns Doctors (Works Fast)**

By Health Insight Journal

**Elin Nordegren Reappears At 44 And Her Fans Are Saddened**

By Cider Gossip

**Taylor, 34, Drives Probably The Most Expensive Car In The World**

By Ancient Facts

**Top Doctor: If You Eat Eggs Every Day, This Is What Happens**

By GundryMD

**These Savings Accounts Are Paying at an All Time High (12% Interest)**

By Savings Accounts



Top ^



About



Contact



Services



Quick Links



[Your CA Privacy Rights \(Shine the Light\)](#) | [DAA Industry Opt Out](#)

[Your Privacy Choices \(Opt Out of Sale/Targeted Ads\)](#)