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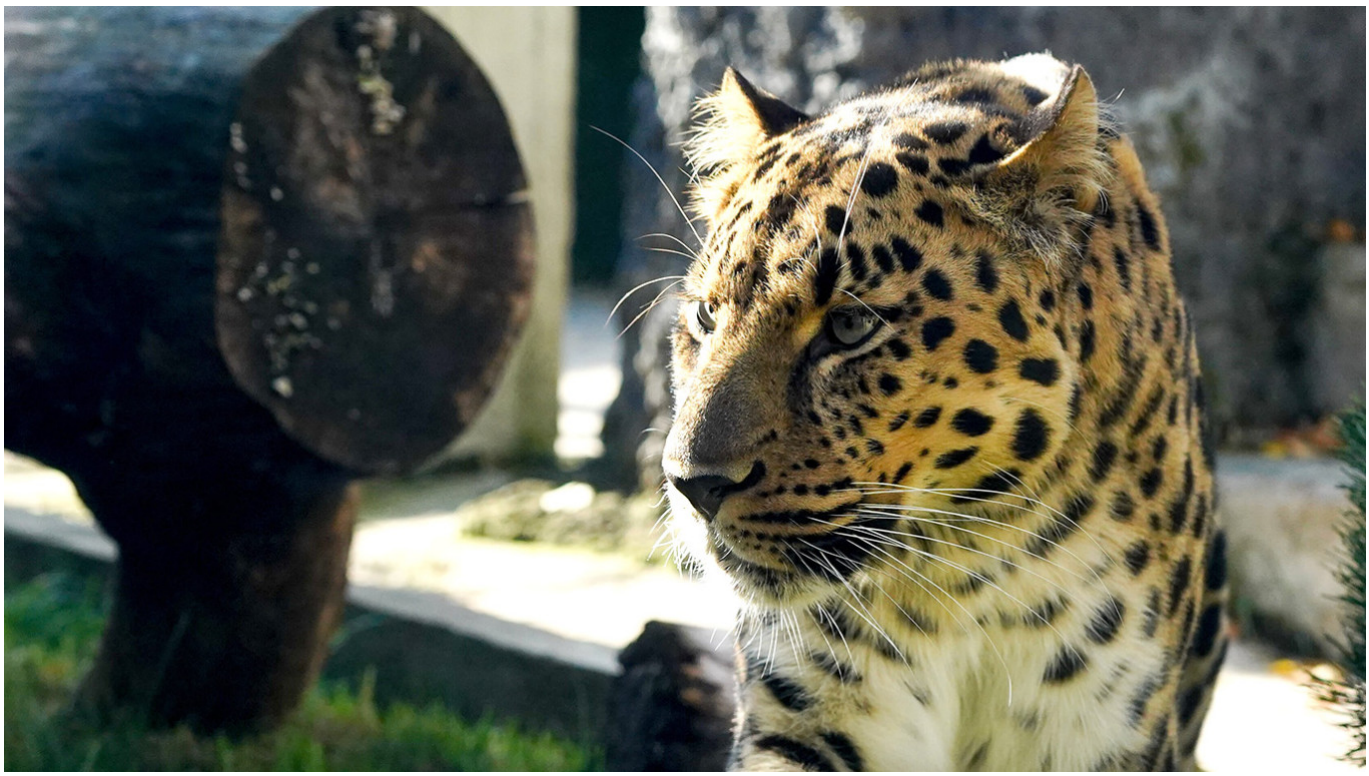
Police Arrest Man for Throwing Pills Into Moscow Zoo Enclosures

May 28, 2025



A leopard at the Moscow Zoo. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Law enforcement authorities said Wednesday that they arrested a man caught on video tossing pills into lynx and leopard enclosures at the Moscow Zoo.

Zoo director Svetlana Akulova shared surveillance footage showing the man making throwing motions toward the animals' cages on Tuesday. Moscow Zoo staff later recovered 37 pills from the scene.

"This wasn't an accident or a prank, but a deliberate and cold-blooded attempt on the lives of animals under our protection," Akulova wrote on Telegram.

Police spokeswoman Irina Volk said the suspect, a 43-year-old man, was arrested in the Presnensky district of central Moscow, where the zoo is located.

"According to preliminary information, he threw pills containing valerian extract into the cages," Volk said. The over-the-counter herbal supplement can have a stimulative effect on

big cats in small doses.

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Volk said investigators are still determining the man's motive before deciding what charges to pursue.

The Kommersant business newspaper, citing unnamed sources, reported that the man, identified as Emil Atsayev, is registered with a psychiatric clinic and has two prior criminal convictions.

Atsayev allegedly told police he gave the pills to the animals because he wanted to "heal" and "revive" them, according to the report.

Authorities plan to conduct a psychiatric evaluation and may order compulsory treatment, Kommersant said.

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