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Movie filming shuts down Santa Ana Zoo

The zoo is closed to the public for three days this week for a film starring John Travolta and Robin Williams.



By RICHARD CHANG
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Hollywood has closed the Santa Ana Zoo for several days.

The cast and crew of “Old Dogs,” a comedy starring John Travolta and Robin Williams, have been busy this week doing reshoots for the film, which is slated for release in April 2009. The zoo shut its doors on Tuesday and will remain closed through Thursday. It will reopen Friday.

“Old Dogs” is a Disney project directed by Walt Becker, who also directed the hit comedies “Wild Hogs” and “Van Wilder.” “Old Dogs” tells the story of two friends and business partners who find their lives turned upside down when they are placed in the care of 7-year-old twins, according to imdb.com.

Santa Ana city and zoo officials have reported numerous sightings of stars Travolta and Williams at and around the zoo. The movie also stars Kelly Preston, Matt Dillon, Rita Wilson, Bernie Mac and Laura Allen. Ella Bleu Travolta, the daughter of Travolta and Preston, appears in the project as well.

Tapestry Films, the production company, has compensated the city, which owns the zoo, for lost ticket sales, concessions, gift shop purchases, train operation, staff overtime and security, said Donna Schultze, recreation supervisor at Santa Ana Parks, Recreation and Community Services Agency.

“We’re not losing any money,” she said. “We don’t get big ones like this too often.” Late June is typically a slow time of year for the zoo anyway, said Kent Yamaguchi, curator of education for Santa Ana.

Most of “Old Dogs” was shot in New York and Connecticut. The Santa Ana Zoo is said to resemble some of the East Coast settings, so reshoots are being done there.

The zoo and sets for the movie are closed, and visitors are not welcome.

In an MTV movie blog, Williams said, “It’s basically the idea that old dogs can learn new tricks. It’s about two men in what they call the twilight or the golden years, older men. (My character) finds out that he has twins that he didn’t know about (and) then the kids are suddenly told, ‘This is your dad, and you’re going to stay with him for the weekend.’”

Travolta said in the blog: “I’m doing a film with the family. I’m doing a film with Kelly, my wife, and my daughter Ella for the first time.”