

BCSPCA

Clarification on the BC SPCA Wildlife Act Submission

The BC SPCA is not leading a ban on exotic animals.

But it is pushing for a clear definition of the term “wildlife” within the confines of the BC Wildlife Act because without such an amendment, lions, tigers, primates and venomous reptiles and invertebrates will remain legally domestic animals in BC.

The Society made a submission in June 2007 during the Wildlife Act review process launched by the BC Ministry of Environment. In addition to suggested changes to wildlife rehabilitation, hunting and farming of wildlife practices, the Society asked the Ministry to revise the Act by redefining what constitutes “wildlife” in BC. This recommendation would align the BC Wildlife Act with the current Alberta legislation where all wild animals, whether native or exotic are designated legally as “wildlife”. The proposal stems from our position that some form of regulation is required for exotic wild animals and that the keeping certain types of dangerous animals as pets in private hands compromises both the health and safety of humans and, given their complex biological needs, the welfare of these animals.

Currently there is a campaign on the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council of Canada website <http://www.pijaccanada.com/en/news/legislative/> from which many chat rooms and blogs are extracting false information. The site asserts, *“Some of the changes could impose severe and unnecessary restrictions on owners of less traditional but highly recognized pets. We are talking about pet birds, pet reptiles, pet invertebrates, small mammals and ornamental fish. Without these pets, there would little need for their related pet products!”*

The above statement and the idea that the BC SPCA is somehow leading a ban on exotic animals are absolutely incorrect.

The BC SPCA’s submission is silent on pet birds and pet fish, and therefore we have not included any comment on their suitability as pets. The list of “domestic” animals we proposed to the government is for the administrative purpose of defining “wildlife” and distinguishing the difference in legislation; **the list does not infer the appropriateness of any particular species (wild or domestic) as a companion animal.**

The list of prohibited animals we are encouraging the government to regulate, however, does include some reptiles and invertebrates that we regard as unsuitable as pets for safety and health reasons (all venomous reptiles and invertebrates, crocodiles, boas and pythons, turtles and tortoises and monitor lizards). It’s worth acknowledging that if the

BC SPCA had wanted to prohibit the reptile pet trade, we would have included all smaller reptiles in our recommendations, but no such mention of these species was made.

Additionally, the BC SPCA indicated in the submission that we are supportive of some form of accreditation process that will allow certain individuals or institutions that have a legitimate education mandate and are able to provide for all the complex needs of the animal, to continue to possess animals from the prohibited list. A permit system could also grandfather all current exotic wild animals in private possession on the prohibited list.

Our prohibited list includes wild cats, bears, ungulates, elephants, bats, marsupials and marine mammals to mention a few. Most pet stores in BC sell neither these animals nor their related food and supplies, and therefore would not be financially impacted by the regulation of these species. Furthermore, if there were as many people in BC who owned exotic animals like tigers as there are people who own dogs and horses, the resultant injuries and deaths would be epidemic.

Sincerely,

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