

<http://myfwc.com/whatsnew/07/statewide/captiverules.html>

## News Release

### FWC sharpening captive wildlife regulations

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Commissioners for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) approved new rules concerning reptiles and other captive wildlife Wednesday. The rules will go into effect as early as Jan. 1.

Meanwhile, FWC staff is working with stakeholders and others to stem the invasion of nonnative species that displace or prey on Florida's native species in the wild.

FWC officials plan to work with the agency's Captive Wildlife Technical Advisory Group during the next year to address unresolved issues such as classification of wildlife, regulation of crossbred animals, public contact with wildlife, wildlife sanctuaries and wildlife rehabilitators.

New rules address appropriate locations for housing certain wildlife and the possession and housing of certain reptiles. When they take effect, new rules will require persons who keep wildlife in captivity to have critical incident/disaster plans describing what they will do in the event of a hurricane, flood or fire to prevent animals from escaping into the wild.

They will prohibit providing false information to qualify for permits where documented experience is required. The rules also define "reptiles of concern" and establish requirements for possession. Also, they require having a bite-response plan and cage card identification system for facilities with venomous reptiles.

Escapes of reptiles of concern or nonnative species of venomous reptiles must be reported immediately upon discovery to FWC's Division of Law Enforcement.

These rules create the list of reptiles of concern -- the Indian or Burmese python, reticulated python, African rock python, Amethystine or scrub python, green anaconda and the Nile monitor lizard.

Beginning Jan. 1, a permit will be required to possess these reptiles of concern. People who possess these reptiles as pets must be at least 18 years old and complete an application and

questionnaire for the free permit.

The applicant must demonstrate knowledge of the reptile of concern by answering questions about the species, dietary needs, basic husbandry and caging and safe housing requirements. People who possess reptiles of concern will have to ensure their pets are permanently identified by implanting a microchip once the reptile reaches 2 inches in diameter. They also must meet specific record-keeping, reporting, safe housing and minimum cage requirements.

“FWC supports responsible pet ownership. We encourage people wanting to own captive wildlife to learn about the animal, its needs and behaviors before getting the animal,” said FWC Capt. Linda Harrison. “Owners also should be aware that Florida laws prohibit the release of nonnative animals.”

Violations of these rules could lead to non-criminal infractions (\$50 fine) up to criminal misdemeanor charges (up to one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine).

“Before we begin enforcing these new rules we will focus on educating the public and those who are interested in possessing captive wildlife,” Harrison said.

The FWC also is offering an option to pet owners who no longer are able or willing to take care of their fish, amphibians, reptiles or birds.

On March 24 in Clearwater, pet owners may relinquish their animals at FWC’s second Pet Amnesty Day. Owners of animals that require a permit now or starting Jan. 1, may bring the pets in with no questions asked. The FWC will attempt to place surrendered pets with qualified caregivers. During this event, people may visit nonnative fish and reptile exhibits and a snake micro-chipping demonstration.

For more information, visit MyFWC.com and follow the “Wildlife” link to [“Nonnatives.”](#)

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