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Exotic Animal Owners Organization Response to Attempts to Curb Private Ownership of Exotic animals.

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Las Vegas, NV (April 23, 2007)—In response to a number of state legislators introducing bills to ban or curb private ownership of exotic animals in the name of public safety, REXANO (Responsible Exotic Animal Ownership) has been organized to refute claims that these animals are dangerous to the general public.

"In the USA, only one person dies per year as a result of attacks by captive big cats, 1.5 by captive reptiles, 0.81 by captive elephant, 0.125 by captive bear and 0 by captive non-human primate. In comparison, 45,000 people die each year in traffic accidents, 47 by lightning, and 1,600 by falling from stairs. We have detailed information on our website www.rexano.org about our ongoing fight against uninformed legislators and animal rights (AR) activists." says Zuzana Kukol, a Las Vegas tiger trainer and co-founder of REXANO.

REXANO is committed to protecting the rights of animal owners and supportive of responsible private ownership of exotic animals in any form, be it non-commercial pet or sanctuary, as well as commercial breeder or exhibitor.

"Most of the wild habitat is disappearing. The only chance to save many animals such as tigers from extinction is captive breeding in the private sector, who have the majority of available habitat" says Scott Shoemaker, co-founder of REXANO. *"Since at least 1990, there has not been one death as a result of a captive big cat or reptile roaming at large."*

While state bills curbing exotic animal ownership failed to pass in Indiana and West Virginia this year, Ohio, Oregon, Missouri, Florida, Texas and North Carolina currently have active bills. Both Iowa and Washington State's bills have already passed and are waiting for their Governor's signatures. Many states such as West Virginia plan to bring the legislation back next year.

Under the Federal Trade Commission Act:

- advertising must be truthful and non-deceptive
- advertisers must have evidence to back up their claims
- advertisements cannot be unfair.

According to the FTC's Deception Policy Statement, an ad is deceptive if it contains a statement — or omits information — that:

- is likely to mislead consumers acting reasonably under the circumstances
- is "material" — that is, important to a consumer's decision to buy or use the product.

"If it is illegal for businesses to advertise and sell products using misleading and fraudulent claims, why is it OK for legislators and lobbyists to introduce, gain public support and pass bills using fraudulent claims they can't back up with facts?" asks Kukol. "These unneeded tax money wasting bills are appeasing the minority of special interest animal rights groups and a few individuals falling for the claims of imaginary threat at the expense of constitutional freedoms for a majority of Americans. Many animal businesses are regulated out of existence as a result of this deception."

"There are no hard facts or statistics supporting the case for these bans, only so-called incident reports compiled by the various AR groups," says Andrew Wyatt, President of NC Association of Reptile Keepers, www.NCARK.org. "These incident reports amount to scary stories about scary animals. Many are unconfirmed, manufactured and simply ridiculous. Deaths or serious injury are exceedingly rare. The reality is that you are more likely to contract the E.coli virus from eating spinach and die as a result, than die from being attacked by an exotic animal. Fear trumps freedom. Will America be coerced by inflammatory rhetoric from the AR Movement into over reacting to a non-existent threat by enacting overly intrusive animal bans? I hope not".

"Even people who don't own animals should realize that every time a new law is passed, the government powers and bureaucracy grow and our personal freedoms shrink," warns Kukol.

"Animals are personal property. We oppose legislation that restrict the private ownership or use of animals, or that inhibits free trade of any animal provided it meets Ohio Department of Agriculture testing and import requirements," adds Polly Britton, Secretary of the Ohio Association of Animal Owners, www.oaao.us.

"As long as animal welfare and public safety laws are followed, the private ownership of all animals should be protected in the USA," says Shoemaker.