



EXOTIC ANIMAL POLICY

PART 1: Introduction

The issue of exotic animals in captivity has been the subject of strong debate for a long time. This issue is now being debated at the municipal and provincial levels across the country. Such an issue contributed to the creation of PIJAC Canada in 1988, when a group of pet industry players joined together to address concerns over exotic animals in the Toronto area. Their work would lead to the first prohibitive species list ever produced by PIJAC Canada. Since 1988, this list has gone through numerous modifications that reflect the changes experienced in areas such as animal husbandry, captive breeding techniques, public awareness and consumer demand.

No other association in Canada possesses within its ranks the information, experience and knowledge of exotic pets like PIJAC Canada.

For further information on PIJAC Canada and its Exotic Animal Policy, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Louis McCann, PIJAC's Executive Director, at (800) 667-7452.

PART 2: Criteria used to establish the list

Sale of native wildlife

PIJAC Canada shares the concern for the potential threat to indigenous wildlife. PIJAC Canada does not support the sale of indigenous wildlife as pets in Canada. A basic understanding of what constitutes a « pet » is sufficient explanation for that stance.

Danger to the public

The «danger to the public» criteria is best addressed through the use of a prohibited species list. We feel the prohibited species list submitted by PIJAC Canada takes into account all the concerns found under this criteria.

Captive Bred

Our organization encourages and promotes the sale of captive bred animals. It is common knowledge that through this approach, pet retailers are able to provide their customers with animals that are healthier, easier to handle and a lot friendlier towards their prospective owners. This helps maximize the chances of a successful pet-pet owner relationship. This benefits everybody: the animal, the pet owner and the retailer.

Although every one realizes the benefits of captive bred versus wild caught, we must not forget that captive breeding techniques have to be developed and refined. To accomplish this task, wild specimens had, and in some cases still have, to be part of the equation. Today, pet retailers enjoy an increasing variety of captive bred animals to offer to their clients. Pet birds and small mammals available to pet retailers mostly come from captive breeding facilities and this number is increasing every year.

International conventions such as CITES, and closer to home, federal regulations such as WAPPRIITA, recognize the importance of well established, well structured captive breeding programs. Breakthroughs in captive breeding programs often appear through small, devoted hobbyists. Requiring that all animals sold be of captive breeding origin would most certainly hinder the development of captive breeding techniques not yet available for certain species. One can assume that putting in the requirement that only captive bred animals be offered for sale would go against the present trend, encourage black market operations, etc...

Non-threatening to wildlife populations in native habitats

PIJAC Canada has to be concerned with the effects of the possible introduction of exotic species on native wildlife populations. These concerns are best addressed through an exercise which includes a list of prohibited species and the implementation of an educational structure that covers the source and the end user.

Acceptance of what is being traded

Most species available through pet retailers enjoy proven track records as pets. As mentioned previously, more and more of these species are becoming available through the efforts of established captive breeding facilities. Continuing support through information handouts will help to maintain the status of these animals as established «pets».

Veterinary care

Exotic animal medicine is enjoying steady growth as an increasing number of pet owners come to realize the appeal of less conventional pets. With this increased interest comes increasing demand for related services such as veterinary care. Experience has demonstrated that if the demand is created, veterinarians will recognize this opportunity for new business and meet the demand.

Knowledge of pet store owners, transfer of knowledge to buyer, appropriate facilities, national guidelines.

Educating pet industry members remains a top priority for PIJAC Canada. Numerous pet retailers have come to realize that the survival of their businesses rests on their ability to offer their customers high standards of quality and professionalism in areas like animal husbandry and customer satisfaction. PIJAC Canada supports their efforts by providing resource manuals and information on different species which they can in turn pass on to their clientele.

Since September of 1996, PIJAC Canada, with the help of PIJAC USA and the Canadian Wildlife Service, has been offering pet store owners and their employees a Canadian version of the Certified Companion Animal Specialist Certification Program. Unique in Canada, this program is attracting the attention of law enforcement officers from various provincial and federal wildlife agencies.

Compliance with existing regulations, CITES, WAPPRIITA, Agriculture Canada

PIJAC Canada enjoys a proactive working relationship with all the federal agencies responsible for the administration of the above mentioned laws, regulations and international agreements. PIJAC Canada is a strong supporter of actions that favour cooperation rather than confrontation.

PART 3: A prohibited versus a permitted species list ?

The following parameters should be considered when asking this question.

- a) List of criteria that would have to be respected.**
- b) Difficulty in application**
- c) Restriction on trade**

List of criteria

Comments as to a proposed list of criteria are covered in the previous section. These criteria represent those most frequently brought up when dealing with the issue of exotic animals in captivity.

Difficulty in application

If it is assumed that there is agreement on the list of criteria (as previously enumerated) that need to be met, it is safe to say that the number of proposed pet species not meeting the list of criteria is by far much smaller than the list of those that do. If one were to succeed in compiling a list of all permitted species, i.e. those that meet the criteria and are available to the pet trade, it would be a very long list.

It is our opinion that such a list would prove to be an administrative nightmare for those mandated to administer and enforce it. For these individuals to be well versed on each species would be impossible. Another important factor to consider is that, although a large part of the list would be comprised of «established» species, some would vary constantly as a result of changes in consumer demand, market trends, availability of new species, etc..

Updating this list would prove to be a logistical nightmare. A good example is the list used in Newfoundland where only a small number of permitted finch species are listed, when in reality the number of finch species available to the pet trade is much higher.

Modifications to the list would be lengthy, often outdated by the time they would finally be put in place. This situation creates frustration for retailers who see their clientele going to a neighbouring province to legally acquire the species they want (ex.: Ontario-Québec-hedgehogs) and can lead to trends and tendencies which favour black market operations.

Prohibited species lists are much shorter, easier to maintain and to administer. References to the list can be accessed more quickly and can be controlled by more people. The size of the list by itself makes it easier to be cross referenced by common and scientific name.

Restriction on trade

As mentioned previously, opting for a permitted species list makes the introduction of new permitted species difficult to the local pet trade. One has only to mention the domestic ferret (not found in the Newfoundland list), the African pigmy hedgehog and the degu as examples. All three meet the list of criteria (captive bred, easily kept in captivity, etc...). These species, although relatively new to our pet markets, have been available to the pet trade for years.

Omitting to list «permitted» species would put unfair and unjust trade restrictions on pet wholesalers and retailers. This action would be in direct contradiction to the acceptance of the “what is already being traded” criteria. Such situations would not occur with the use of a prohibited species list.

PIJAC CANADA'S EXOTIC ANIMAL POLICY SUGGESTED LIST OF PROHIBITED SPECIES

ALL ARTIODACTYLOUS UNGULATES, EXCEPT DOMESTIC GOATS, SHEEP, PIGS AND CATTLE
ALL CANIDAE, EXCEPT THE DOMESTIC DOG
ALL CROCODYLIANS (SUCH AS ALLIGATORS AND CROCODILES)
ALL EDENTATES (SUCH AS ANTEATERS, SLOTHS AND ARMADILLOS)
ALL ELEPHANTIDAE (ELEPHANTS)
ALL ERINACIDAE (EXCEPT THE AFRICAN PIGMY HEDGEHOG)
ALL FELIDAE, EXCEPT THE DOMESTIC CAT
ALL HYAENIDAE (HYENAS)
ALL MARSUPIALS (EXCEPT SUGAR GLIDERS)
ALL MUSTELIDAE (SUCH AS SKUNKS, OTTERS AND WEASELS) EXCEPT THE DOMESTIC FERRET
ALL NON-HUMAN PRIMATES (SUCH AS GORILLAS AND MONKEYS)
ALL PINNIPEDS (SUCH AS SEALS, FUR SEALS AND WALRUSES)
ALL PERISSODACTYLOUS UNGULATES, EXCEPT THE DOMESTIC HORSE AND ASS
ALL PROCYONIDAE (SUCH AS RACCOONS, COATIS AND CACOMISTLES)
ALL PTEROPODIDAE (BATS)
ALL RAPTORS, DIURNAL AND NOCTURNAL (SUCH AS EAGLES, HAWKS AND OWLS)
ALL RATITES (SUCH AS OSTRICHES, RHEAS AND CASSOWARIES)
ALL URSIDAE (BEARS)
ALL VENOMOUS REPTILES
ALL VIVERRIDAE (SUCH AS MONGOUSES, CIVETS AND GENETS)

Examples of animals of a particular prohibited group are given in parentheses. They are examples only and shall not be construed as limiting the generality of the group.

This list is subject to review according to the accepted criteria.

Revised January 2005

PIJAC Canada's Three meter /two meter rule

When looking at reptiles, PIJAC Canada recommends the three meter/ two meter rule, defined as follows: “ **An adult snake's length cannot exceed three meters and an adult lizard's length cannot exceed two meters (snout to the tip of the tail).**”

PIJAC Canada favours this rule because it is easy to apply. You only require a measuring tape to be able to enforce it. As previously stated, PIJAC Canada favours a prohibited species list instead of a permitted one. However, regardless of the approach used, the more species that are added to a list, the greater the training required by the officers to properly identify them.

Based on past experience, relying on identification can be problematic. With age, the species colour patterns may change. There are also a growing number of colours available to herpetoculturists (albinos, hypomenalistic, granite, calico, etc.). Some of the species are crossbred or inbred, resulting in new sub-species. The three-meter rule takes into account all of these situations.

The rationale can be found in our Exotic Animal Policy, a copy of which is enclosed for your consideration.

As a complement to this approach, PIJAC Canada identifies six different species and one sub-specie of snakes that should be prohibited as pets. All of them exceed three meters and are recognized for their nasty disposition. They are all members of the Family *Boidae*, and we recommend their inclusion on a prohibited species list, under a statement such as: « These six species and this one sub-specie, members of the *Boidae* Family »

| <u>Species</u> | <u>English common Name</u> | <u>*Length</u> |
|---|----------------------------|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Eunectes murinus</i> | Green anaconda | 6 to 8 m |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Eunectes notaeus</i> | Yellow anaconda | 5 to 6 m |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Python reticulatus</i> | Reticulated python | 6 to 10 m |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Python sebae</i> | African rock python | 6 to 9 m |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Python molurus bivittatus</i> | Burmese python | 5 to 8 m |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Python molurus molurus</i> | Indian python | 5 to 6 m |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Morelia amethystina</i> | Amethyst python | 6 to 8 m |

***Length suggested in literature. Snakes grow during their entire life and the total length they may reach is greatly influenced by the captive conditions in which they are kept.**

As mentioned previously, they are all covered in the three-meter/ two-meter rule. As for the two-meter rule in lizards, it basically eliminates all the nasty specimens, as well as those that are of real threat to pet owners.