



# OHIO GOVERNOR IMPLEMENTS EXECUTIVE ORDER ON “DANGEROUS WILD ANIMALS”

**\*\* HB 352 INTRODUCED BANNING OWNERSHIP  
OF “DANGEROUS EXOTIC ANIMALS” \*\***

## **The Issue:**

In response to recent events in Ohio, Governor Kasich has issued an Executive Order and the General Assembly has proposed legislation pertaining to the ownership of dangerous wild animals. The [Executive Order \(EO\)](#) calls for review of all existing native wild animal permits, restricts wild animal auctions and states that new legal powers will be proposed by November 30<sup>th</sup>. [House Bill 352](#) was also introduced banning the possession of dangerous exotic animals and requiring any person that currently owns such animal(s) to register them with the Division of Wildlife.

## **The Impact:**

### **Executive Order**

Governor Kasich’s [Executive Order](#), effective October 21, 2011, does the following:

- Instructs the Ohio Department of Health, Department of Natural Resources and Department of Agriculture to work together to investigate and inquire into private places where dangerous wild animals are kept. These agencies must also work with local humane societies, veterinarians and others to determine where properties are located that contain dangerous wild animals.
- Tasks the Department of Natural Resources with establishing a toll-free hotline and website for complaints and inquiries concerning dangerous wild animals.
- Requires inspection of premises of all current license holders who possess potentially dangerous wild animals.
- Calls for the Department of Agriculture to identify any persons or groups conducting auctions within in the state without proper licensing.

- States that the “Regulating Dangerous Wild Animals” Workgroup must complete its study and provide recommendations on importation, licensing and regulation of dangerous wild animals by November 30, 2011.

The EO includes a number of references to state agency coordination with local humane societies in regulating dangerous wild animals. Ohio law gives humane societies broad authority, including arrest authority, to enforce Ohio’s animal welfare laws, in coordination with local officials.

### **House Bill 352**

[HB 352](#) declares a ban on ownership of any animal defined as a “dangerous exotic animal”. The bill defines the following animals as “dangerous wild animals”:

- A large cat other than a cat commonly known as a house cat;
- A nonhuman primate, except a nonhuman primate that provides support or assistance for a mobility impaired person;
- An alligator;
- A crocodile;
- A constricting snake;
- A venomous snake; and
- Any other animal designated by the Chief of the Division of Wildlife.

If this bill is enacted, any person who currently owns a dangerous exotic animal will be required to register the animal with the division of wildlife within 60 days of the effective date of this legislation. A registration will only be issued if:

- The applicant has not been convicted of an offense involving the abuse or neglect of any animal pursuant to any local, state, or federal law; and
- The applicant has not had a license or permit regarding the care, possession, exhibition, breeding, or sale of animals revoked or suspended by any local, state, or federal agency.

Any person who registers a dangerous wild animal will be required to have the animal microchipped.

If a person is found in non-compliance with these requirements he/she is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree on a first offense and a felony of the fifth degree on each subsequent offense.

### **PIJAC Position:**

PIJAC supports reasonable regulation of animals that may threaten public health and safety. Outright bans on such animals, however, are both counterproductive and inappropriate. Such bans drive ownership underground, thereby depriving the government of effective regulation, and eliminate the safe and responsible ownership of animals by those with the knowledge and resources necessary for such ownership. Furthermore, not all so-called “exotic animals” do in fact represent a significant health or safety risk to the public.

## **Recommended Action:**

The introduced legislation and independent executive branch action represent two different initiatives. The Governor's Executive Order, while already in effect, is merely a precursor to potentially more restrictive action based on the recommendations of the Workgroup. **Therefore, it is critical that pet owners and others concerned about preserving the right to keep pets communicate directly with the Governor.**

House Bill 352 imposes far more stringent restrictions, including an absolute ban on ownership of specified animals. Contact your elected House Representative **immediately** to voice your opposition to this draconian approach to regulating potentially dangerous animals.

**[Click here](#)** to compose a message to the Governor and your Representative(s). You may wish to reference the following points, using your own words, in responding to both the Executive Order and the legislation:

- Rational legislation should impose requirements that ensure that potentially dangerous animals are properly maintained only by persons qualified to keep them, not banned altogether.
- Banning animals will drive owners underground, making it far more difficult for the state to identify where such animals are located and to properly regulate them.
- A “feel-good approach” to an emotional incident makes poor public policy. The people of Ohio are much better served by a thought out, deliberate response.
- The definition of a “dangerous animal” should be narrowly drawn to encompass only those animals that represent a legitimate threat to public safety. Broad categories such as “all constrictor snakes” are unnecessary and inappropriate.

**Visit [PIJAC's Legislative Action Center](#) to quickly and easily find out who your Representative is!**

For questions or additional information about this legislation, contact PIJAC's Bambi Osborne via email at [bambi@pijac.org](mailto:bambi@pijac.org) or Michael Maddox at [Michael@pijac.org](mailto:Michael@pijac.org), or contact PIJAC by phone at 202-452-1525.