



VIRGINIA WILD ANIMAL BILL CARRIED OVER TO 2013

The Issue:

Legislation to prohibit ownership of various species of animals in Virginia has been put on hold while the sponsor considers a number of changes to the bill. Delegate Chris Peace (R), who sponsored [House Bill 1242](#), solicited input from PIJAC and other stakeholders and has determined that action on the measure this session is not feasible. As a result, the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources today formally carried the bill over to 2013.

The Impact:

HB 1242, as originally introduced, would prohibit the possession, sale, transfer, or breeding of certain listed species, subject to some statutory exceptions. Species subject to the ban include:

- All species and hybrids of the genera *Canis* (wolves and related species), *Cuon* (dholes), *Lycaon* (African wild dogs), and *Chrysocyon* (maned wolves); excluding *Canis lupus familiaris* (domestic dogs) and *Canis lupus familiaris* hybrids
- All species and hybrids of the family *Felidae* (all felids); excluding *Felis catus* (domestic cats) and *Felis catus* hybrids
- All species and hybrids of bears
- All species of hyena and aardwolf
- All species of alligators, crocodiles, caimans, and gharials
- All species and hybrids of apes, galagos, lemurs, lorises, and monkeys, excluding humans
- All species of elephants
- All species and hybrids of the family *Atractaspididae*, such as mole vipers
- All species “that may be described as family *Pythonidae*”
- All species and hybrids of the genera *Apodora* (pythons), *Eunectes* (anacondas), *Liasis* (pythons), *Morelia* (pythons), and *Python* (pythons); excluding *Morelia viridis* (green tree pythons), *Python anchietae* (Angolan pythons), and *Python regius* (ball or royal pythons)
- All species and hybrids of the genera *Dispholidus* (boomslangs), *Rhabdophis* (keelbacks), and *Thelotornis* (twig snakes)
- All species of the family *Elapidae*, “to include all species that may be described as family *Hydrophiidae*,” such as cobras, mambas, coral snakes, and sea snakes
- All species of the family *Viperidae*, such as rattlesnakes, pit vipers, and puff adders.

This prohibition was subject to certain limited exemptions, such as AZA accredited or certified entities and certain facilities with an AZA relationship; AWA certified research facilities; Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries accredited facilities; AWA licensed circuses “that are temporarily” in the Commonwealth; federal, state, or local government facilities or agents; licensed veterinary establishments temporarily holding an animal; and “a person temporarily transporting an animal through the state if the transit time is not more than 24 hours, the animal is not exhibited, and the animal is maintained at all times in a species-appropriate cage or other travel container such that there is no opportunity for physical contact with any member of the public.”

There is also a grandfathering clause in the bill that would allow persons in possession of a listed animal when the law became effective to keep, but not breed, such animal. Keeping animals under the grandfather clause would require registration with the state, and meeting other requirements on the keeping and disposition of the animals. **HB 1242 also would allow the listing of additional restricted species by regulation.**

PIJAC Position:

PIJAC supports reasonable regulation of animals that may pose a threat to public health or safety, but does not believe absolute bans are sound public policy. It may be appropriate to restrict ownership of certain species not generally kept as pets to persons with the specific knowledge and facilities to properly maintain them.

Recommended Action:

No further action will occur on [HB 1242](#) this legislative session, but the bill will remain in committee for further consideration during the second year of the session (2013). PIJAC will continue working with the sponsor concerning objections to this legislation.

Please note that [Senate Bill 477](#), which also bans possession of certain species of animals, remains active at this time. The bill is currently in the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Natural Resources. PIJAC is working with interested parties on addressing concerns about this legislation as well. PIJAC will publish an updated *PetAlert* when there is any change in status on either of these bills. For additional information on these bills, or other legislation impacting the keeping, breeding or selling of pets, please feel free to contact PIJAC’s Michael Maddox at 202-452-1525, ext. 106, or via email at michael@pijac.org with questions or concerns.

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On behalf of pets, responsible pet owners, and the pet industry, we thank you!