



VIRGINIA WILD ANIMAL BILL ON SENATE COMMITTEE AGENDA

****HEARING SET FOR FEBRUARY 9th****

The Issue:

Legislation to prohibit ownership of specified species characterized as “dangerous wild animals” in Virginia was carried over to 2013 in the House of Delegates, and a Senate version of the bill has now been scheduled for a hearing in the [Committee Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources](#). **However, the office of Senate sponsor Louise L. Lucas (D-18) has announced that the Senator will move that SB 477 be tabled at Thursday’s hearing.**

The Impact:

[SB 477](#) prohibits the possession, sale, transfer, or breeding of certain listed species, subject to some statutory exceptions. Species subject to the ban include:

- Red wolves (*Canis rufus*) and gray wolves (*Canis lupus*), including wolf-dog hybrids
- Lions (*Panthera leo*), tigers (*Panthera tigris*), leopards (*Panthera pardus*), clouded leopards (*Neofelis nebulosa*), snow leopards (*Panthera uncia*), jaguars (*Panthera onca*), cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*), cougars/pumas/mountain lions (*Puma concolor*), including hybrids thereof.
- All species of primates (excluding humans)
- All species of bears
- All species of hyena and aardwolf
- All species of elephants
- All species of alligators, crocodiles, caimans, and gharials
- All species of the family Atractaspididae, such as mole vipers
- Anacondas, boa constrictors, Burmese pythons, reticulated pythons, amethystine pythons, scrub pythons, Northern African pythons, Southern African pythons
- All species of the Family Elapidae, such as cobras, mambas, and coral snakes
- Boomslangs and twig snakes
- All species of the family Hydrophiidae, “such as sea snakes”
- All species of the family Viperidae, such as rattlesnakes, pit vipers, and puff adders

Several exemptions to the ban are included in SB 477, such as AZA accredited or certified entities and certain facilities with an AZA relationship; AWA certified research facilities; wildlife sanctuaries; “duly incorporated nonprofit animal protection organizations” which include humane societies and shelters; and licensed veterinary hospitals for the purpose of providing treatment. The bill would also exempt a person temporarily transporting a legally owned dangerous wild animal through the state if they meet specified conditions.

Like the House version, the bill also includes a grandfathering clause that allows persons in possession of a listed animal prior to July 1, 2012 to keep, but not breed, such animal. Keeping animals under the grandfather clause would require registration with the state for a fee and meeting other requirements on the keeping and disposition of the animals.

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:

PIJAC is not recommending further action on this bill pending the outcome of the February 9th hearing, in light of the commitment of the sponsor to table the measure. However, because legislation to regulate wild animals will remain viable for the future, PIJAC encourages interested parties to check [PIJAC's website](#) for updates. PIJAC will continue working with the sponsors of legislation to regulate such species in Virginia and will apprise members of new developments as appropriate.

For additional information on this legislation, or any other bills 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.



PIJAC Members! PIJAC Fans! Join US...

The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) has been protecting and promoting responsible pet ownership for nearly forty years. Follow our successes, events, and action alerts through Facebook and/or Twitter at PIJAC4pets. If you are not already a Member, please join us today by visiting www.pijac.org/membership. For additional information on PIJAC and its many exciting campaigns, please visit: www.pijac.org. Or, contact us at 1-800-553-PETS (1-800-553-7387); members@pijac.org.

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