

## **Facts about Exotic "Pets"**

1. Millions of wild animals, including reptiles, large felines, nonhuman primates, and others, are kept in private possession in the U.S. The trade in exotic animals is a multi-billion dollar industry.
2. Exotic “pets” are wild animals that do not adjust well to a captive environment. They require special care, housing, diet, and maintenance that the average person cannot provide.
3. It is estimated that between 5,000 and 7,000 tigers are kept as “pets” – more than exist in the wild. A tiger can be purchased for as little as \$300, or less than the cost of a purebred dog.
4. Animals enter the exotic “pet” trade from a variety of sources. Some are stolen from their native habitat; some are “surplus” from zoos or menageries; some are sold at auctions or in pet shops; while others come from backyard breeders. The Internet has dramatically increased the ease with which people can find and purchase wild animals for their private possession.
5. Exotic “pets” purchased as infants are often abandoned by their keepers as they age and become impossible to control. Sanctuaries cannot accommodate the large numbers of unwanted “pets.” As a result, the majority of these animals are euthanized, abandoned, or doomed to live in deplorable conditions.
6. Across the country, privately-held exotic animals have escaped from their enclosures and have attacked humans and other animals – with sometimes fatal results.
7. Many exotic “pets” can transmit deadly diseases – including herpes B, monkeypox, and salmonellosis – to humans.
8. An estimated 90 percent of all reptiles carry and shed salmonella in their feces. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 93,000 salmonella cases caused by exposure to reptiles are reported each year in the United States. As many as 90 percent of all macaque monkeys are infected with herpes B virus, which harmless to monkeys but often fatal in humans.

9. The American Veterinary Medical Association, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the CDC have all expressed opposition to the possession of certain exotic animals by individuals.
10. The sale and possession of exotic animals is regulated by a patchwork of federal, state and local laws that generally vary by community and by animal. Nineteen states prohibit possession of at least large cats, wolves, bears, nonhuman primates, and dangerous reptiles. Thirteen states have a partial ban, prohibiting possession of some exotic animals. Fourteen states require a license or permit to possess exotic animals. The remaining four states do not have a legislative or monitoring scheme, but may regulate some aspect of ownership. Many cities and counties have adopted ordinances that are more stringent than the state law.