

## **L.D.W.F. ADDS BIG EXOTIC CATS TO DANGEROUS LIST**

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries added big exotic cats to the list of Potentially Dangerous Quadrupeds and Non-Human Primates on June 20, 2007

This inclusion to the list makes it illegal to import, possess, purchase or sell a big exotic cat within the state of Louisiana. The rule does not allow temporary exhibitors for any purpose. Big cats covered under this rule include tigers, lions, leopards, jaguars, cheetahs, cougars or mountain lions and all subspecies and hybrids of the cats listed.

“We (LDWF) included big exotic cats to the list as mandated by the State Legislature,” said Maria Davidson, LDWF large carnivore program manager. “Public safety and the animals welfare were our main priorities in developing the rules that will govern all big exotic cat ownership in Louisiana.”

An individual who legally possesses one or more exotic big cats on Aug. 15, 2006 and who can prove legal ownership is authorized to keep those big cats under the following conditions:

- Only those big cats legally possessed on Aug. 15, 2006 will be permitted. Additional big cats cannot be acquired by any means including breeding.
- Individual must apply for and receive a permit from LDWF annually.
- Permitted exotic cats must be prevented from breeding by separate housing or sterilization.
- Permittee or designee must live on the premises.
- LDWF personnel shall be allowed access to inspect the permitted big cat, facilities, equipment, and records for the purpose of ensuring compliance with these regulations.
- A weapon capable of destroying the animal and a long range delivery method for chemical immobilization shall be kept on the premises at all times. Additionally, the applicant shall provide a signed statement from a licensed veterinarian identifying a designated veterinarian who will be on-call at all times to deliver chemical immobilization in the event of an escape.
- Clearly legible signs approved by LDWF shall be posted and displayed at each possible entrance onto the premises where the big cat is located.
- Each permitted big cat must be implanted with a microchip by or under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian.
- Each permitted big cat must remain in its enclosure on the property listed in the permit at all times and cannot be removed from the enclosure, except for proper medical emergencies under the direction of a licensed veterinarian.

- Permittee must notify LDWF, the local sheriff's department and local police department if applicable immediately upon discovery that the permitted big cat is no longer in its enclosure.
- Permittee must notify LDWF prior to any disposition of a permitted big cat, including transportation out of state. LDWF reserves the right to supervise and accompany any such disposition.
- Permitted big cats must be kept in a sanitary and safe condition and may not be kept in a manner that results in the maltreatment or neglect of the big cat.
- Permittee must also comply with any and all applicable federal, other state or local law, rule, regulation, ordinance, permit or other permission.

Big exotic cats must be kept in an enclosure constructed and covered at the top with 9-guage steel chain link or equivalent with tension bars and metal clamps.

The following organizations are exempt from these rules:

- Zoos accredited or certified by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association.
- Research facilities defined in the Animal Welfare Act.
- Any person transporting the cat through the state if the transit time is less than 24 hours and the animal is at all times maintained within a confinement to prevent escape and contact with the public. Exhibiting the big cat would be prohibited.
- Circuses, limited to those temporarily in this state, offering varied performances by live animals, clowns, and acrobats for public entertainment and have Class C licenses under Chapter I of title 9 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Circuses must not include entertainment that includes wrestling, photography opportunities or an activity in which a big cat and a patron are in close contact with each other.
- Louisiana colleges or universities would be allowed possession of a big cat of the species traditionally kept by the college or university as a school mascot after proper documentation was provided to LDWF that the college or university has consistently over the years possessed a big exotic cat as its mascot.

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