



April 2021

Dear Member of Parliament,

Call for review and reform of the laws on the private keeping of Dangerous Wild Animals

We are writing to you to express our concerns in relation to the keeping of dangerous wild animals within Great Britain, highlighted by the documentary "Britain's Tiger Kings" presented by Ross Kemp and aired recently on ITV, and to ask you to support our call for a comprehensive review of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 and its schedule.

Born Free's latest research into the private keeping of dangerous wild animals in Great Britain revealed there were at least 3,951 wild animals held under licence, including 320 big cats, 274 primates and 508 venomous snakes. Concerningly, we estimate there has been a 59% increase in exotic pets held under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act since 2000. These figures represent the tip of the iceberg when you consider likely levels of non-compliance with the legislation by some owners, and the fact that many species of wild animals do not currently fall within the schedule.

This appears to fly in the face of the intention of the act. When debating the Bill in Parliament in 1976, Lord Chelwood emphasised, "*...in future the keeping of dangerous wild animals by private individuals should be made a wholly exceptional circumstance*".

Whilst modest changes have been made to the Schedule over the years, the Act itself has not been substantially updated for more than 40 years. There are still species absent from the Schedule, which, under other legislation, including the Zoo Licensing Act, are regarded as a risk to the public e.g. large varanids like Komodo dragons, large python & boa species, and a number bird of prey species. The current legislation also makes obtaining a licence too easy and there is concern that licencing inspections are inconsistent and subjective. Whilst the legislation acknowledges the need to protect the safety of the public, it fails to address the safety of the owners and the behavioural, environmental, social, nutrition and other welfare requirements of the wild animals that are in their possession.

We are therefore calling for far greater restrictions on the trade in and keeping of wild animals as pets in the UK, based on thorough and precautionary criteria designed to determine whether such animals are suitable as pets. Such criteria should include consideration of:

- Whether individual welfare needs can be met, and owners have the necessary qualifications and experience
- Whether trade is likely to compromise the conservation of species in the wild
- Potential environmental concerns, such as the escape of invasive species
- Risks to public and animal health & safety, including zoonoses.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter and urge you to support our calls by requesting the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs instigates a comprehensive review without delay.

We look forward to your response and stand ready to provide further information.

Yours Sincerely,



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