



General Purposes Committee

Date: Tuesday, April 22nd, 2003

Place: Anderson Room
Richmond City Hall

Present: Mayor Malcolm D. Brodie, Chair
Councillor Linda Barnes
Councillor Derek Dang
Councillor Sue Halsey-Brandt
Councillor Rob Howard
Councillor Kiichi Kumagai
Councillor Bill McNulty
Councillor Harold Steves

Absent: Councillor Evelina Halsey-Brandt

Call to Order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

1. It was moved and seconded
That the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on Monday, April 7th, 2003, be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

URBAN DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

2. **VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT NIGHT OPERATIONS**
(Report: Mar. 20/03, File No.: 0153-01) (REDMS No. 982732)

The Manager, Policy Planning, Terry Crowe, accompanied by Planner Rob Innes, advised that he had nothing to add to his report.

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Discussion then ensued among Committee members and staff on the rationale for closing the north runway between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. rather than the south runway. Advice was given by Cllr. Kumagai that it was his understanding that a commitment was made during the public consultation process on the construction of the north runway that, if possible, all aircraft take-offs and landings would be over water.

Discussion continued, reference was made to the existing flight path over the Cambie/Bridgeport Road area and a question was raised about the feasibility of easing the situation in that area. A question was also asked about the feasibility of extending the departure restrictions for Chapter 2 aircraft beyond the current midnight to 6:00 a.m. period.

Mr. Doug Louth, of 4140 Dallyn Road, advised that the Federal Government had banned the use of the north runway from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Mr. Louth stated that even though the north runway was not to be in use from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., two or three flights were still taking off from that runway during the early morning hours (2:30 a.m.) which disrupted the sleep of those residents living under the flight path.

Mr. Louth urged the Committee to take action to stop these flights, advising that at one time a curfew had been in place to prevent late night flights; however, at some point, the curfew had been changed without consultation with those residents who were most affected. He suggested that there should be a consultation process with the people in the area, City staff and representatives of YVR. Mr. Louth added that the late night flights had been taking place for the past five to seven years, but there was no mention of these flights in the staff report.

As a result of the discussion, the following **referral** motion was introduced:

It was moved and seconded

That the report (dated March 20th, 2003, from the Manager, Policy Planning), regarding the Vancouver International Airport Night Operations, be referred to staff with the request that a meeting be arranged with Cambie Road area residents, the YVR and staff on airport noise issues.

CARRIED

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FINANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES DIVISION

3. **CLARIFICATION OF PET STORE REGULATIONS REGARDING THE SALE OF WILD ANIMALS**

(Report: Apr. 7/03, File No.: 8060-20-7504) (REDMS No. 980293, 992525, 986554, 986558)

Staff Solicitor Rebecca Bittel, accompanied by the General Manager, Finance & Corporate Services, Jim Bruce, explained that the proposed amendments applied only to pet stores. She advised that the amendments now being proposed had resulted from Super Pet applying for a business licence, at which time a question had been raised about the types of animals which that store would be permitted to sell.

Ms. Amanda Fenrick, representing the West Coast Society for the Preservation and Conservation of Reptiles, voiced her opposition to the proposed prohibition of the sale of wild or exotic animals. She referred to the staff report and expressed her disagreement with a number of statements made with respect to the such matters as the potential serious health risks posed by snakes to humans. A brief discussion ensued between Cllr. Steves and the delegation on the feasibility of encouraging pet stores to sell animals which were indigenous to Richmond.

Ms. Cheri Simmons, Store Manager, Super Pet, spoke in opposition to the staff recommendation which would result in a total prohibition of the sale of wild and exotic animals in pet stores. A copy of her submission is attached as Schedule A and forms part of these minutes. Copies of 'care' bulletins which Ms. Simmons circulated to the Committee are on file in the City Clerk's Office. Ms. Simmons indicated that she and her store supported the 'alternative approach' proposed by staff.

Discussion then ensued among Committee members and the delegation, during which information was provided that:

- Ms. Simmons supported a ban of the sale of certain types of reptiles because of their size, such as boa constrictors and pythons
- education was a high priority with the staff at Super Pet to ensure that future owners were fully aware of what would be required of them in taking care of an animal
- difficulties could arise for the owners of reptiles if they were no longer able to purchase live food for their reptiles from pet stores; if the prohibition was imposed, pet stores would no longer have a reason to stock such food as they would no longer be permitted sell reptiles.

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Mr. Ian Toon, General Manager, Super Pet Canada, spoke about the negative financial impact which such a prohibition would have on pet stores because residents would be required to go elsewhere to purchase reptiles, the equipment needed to provide the reptiles an adequate living area, and their food. He advised that Super Pet did not sell reptiles to any individual under the age of 18 without the approval of a parent or guardian.

Mr. Toon then spoke about the commitment required of pet owners to their animals, and the difficulties encountered in trying to find homes for reptiles, during which he stated that there was no evidence to indicate that these animals were being released into the wild. He also spoke about the keeping of reptiles, stating that reptiles did not carry any greater risk than the average cat or dog, and the likelihood of reptile owners becoming ill with salmonella poisoning. In concluding his presentation, Mr. Toon advised that he would support the regulated sale of reptiles.

Mr. John Edmundson, Manager of Pet Habitat, expressed concern that the proposals which he had suggested as part of the feedback sought by the Staff Solicitor had been disregarded in the bylaw now being considered by the Committee. He noted that reptiles as pets were becoming more and more popular and now City staff were proposing a total ban of captive bred reptiles because of perceived health issues. Mr. Edmundson advised that his company would like to continue to offer reptiles as pets to their customers; he added that the ban would make it more difficult for reptile owners to purchase food and products to maintain their pets in the best of health. He further stated that Pet Habitat did not object to regulations to control the selling of reptiles but were of the view that an outright ban was 'overkill'.

During the discussion which ensued with the delegation, Mr. Edmundson stated that he would support regulations regarding the sale of the dangerous species of venomous and poisonous reptiles and giant snakes. He stated that with regard to the larger snakes, the issue would be whether a facility was available which could accommodate these snakes.

Mr. Glen Ranger, an employee at an animal supply wholesaler in Richmond, spoke about the rapid increase in popularity of reptile ownership. He expressed the opinion that an outright ban on the sale of reptiles was foolish, and suggested that education was the key to ensuring that reptile owners took proper care of their pets and were responsible in the way in which they handled their pets.

A brief discussion then took place among Committee members and the delegation on the matter of reptile sales, during which Mr. Ranger reiterated his support for the 'alternate approach' proposed by staff to regulate the sale of reptiles.

At this point in the meeting, because of the support given by the delegations who had spoken in support of the 'alternate approach', the Chair, with the Committee's agreement, asked that all subsequent speakers focus their remarks on this proposal.

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Ms. Val Lofvendahl, of Gilbert Road, and a reptile enthusiast, spoke in support of the 'alternate approach'. She referred to correspondence which she had sent to the Mayor and Council (dated April 21st, 2003), and reiterated that the health risks related to the keeping of reptiles was not as high as suggested in the staff report. A copy of Ms. Lofvenchal's letter is attached as Schedule B and forms part of these minutes.

Ms. Lofvendahl spoke about the need for education and cleanliness, and voiced her support for the posting of signs and the care sheets issued by Super Pet. She also advised that the keeping of native snakes was illegal.

Ms. Dawn Patterson, the owner of Fin-Omenal Fish & Exotics, expressed support for the 'alternate approach'. She stated that she prided herself on the cleanliness of her store, how she housed her reptiles, and only purchased her reptiles from local breeders. Ms. Patterson further stated that her snakes were disease free and that potential customers had a week of orientation before they were allowed to take their purchases home.

Ms. Calli Jensen, a 'team leader' at Super Pet, advised that she bred animals and was a reptile enthusiast. She stated that a total ban on reptiles sales would have a negative impact on her customers.

Ms. Debra Probert, Executive Director, Vancouver Humane Society, spoke in support of a total ban on the sale of reptiles. A copy of Ms. Probert's submission is attached as Schedule C and forms part of these minutes.

Discussion then ensued among Committee members and the delegation. In response to questions, Ms. Probert advised that there should be a ban on the sale of all exotic animals.

Mr. Craig Daniel, General Manager, Cruelty Investigations, BC SPCA, addressed a number of concerns which he had with the proposed recommendation to expand the list of prohibited animals to include certain wild and exotic animals. He stated that the proposed amendment would result in a significant increase in the number of abandoned exotic animals within the City, and commented that the SPCA did not have the facilities to keep these animals. He advised that the BC SPCA currently provided bylaw enforcement to the City and a change in the Business Regulation Bylaw would mean that the Society would have to examine the question of how and what would the impact be on the enforcement of the bylaw in the future.

Mr. Daniel referred to statements made that having reptiles as pets was no different than owning cats or dogs, and stated that one of the problems was that there was no where to send abandoned reptiles and that the only option was euthanasia. He urged the Committee to think of the larger picture, noting that there was already a problem with abandoned red-eared slider turtles, and he questioned which species would be next. In concluding his presentation, Mr. Daniel urged the Committee to adopt the staff recommendations and not permit the sale of reptiles.

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In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Daniel advised that approximately 20% of the complaints received province-wide by the SPCA from the public dealt with reptiles, however statistics were not available for Richmond. He further stated that allowing the sale of reptiles could result in an increase in the number of complaints received by the BC SPCA or the City, and could result in increased enforcement requirements.

Ms. Christine Schramm, representing the Raintree Reptile Refuge Society, stated that there was a major problem in the Lower Mainland with unwanted reptiles and advised that she received telephone calls on a daily basis from people with dying, sick or unwanted animals. She then provided information on the Raintree Reptile Society, noting that the facility currently housed over 400 snakes and other reptiles. Ms. Schramm questioned whether reptiles should be considered as pets, and noted that certain reptiles, even though they start out small, grow to become very large.

During the discussion which ensued among Committee members and the delegation, Ms. Schramm, in responding to questions about educating the public, suggested that perhaps schools should have education programs on reptiles.

Discussion ensued briefly among Committee members on the appropriate course of action to take, and as a result, the following **referral** motion was introduced:

It was moved and seconded

That the report (dated April 7th, 2003, from the General Manager, Finance & Corporate Services), regarding Clarification of Pet Store Regulations regarding the Sale of Wild Animals, be referred to staff to bring forward bylaw amendments which support the "alternative approach" proposed in the staff report; and that the following issues be addressed as part of this "alternative approach":

- (1) whether there should be any discrimination in the types and sizes of snakes;***
- (2) the inclusion in the "alternative approach", consideration of restricting sales to captive-bred reptiles;***
- (3) the inclusion of legislation which would prohibit the sale of reptiles to anyone under the age of 18;***
- (4) the need for some type of education for all types of pets;***
- (5) the inclusion of a requirement that pet store operators must keep a pet registry for reptiles and exotic animals;***
- (6) the inclusion of a requirement that information be provided to customers on potential health risks; and***
- (7) the sale of red-eared slider turtles;***

and that staff consult with the various pet store operators and other interested bodies in the preparation of the proposed bylaw amendment.

CARRIED

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4. RICHMOND AWARENESS MARKETING CAMPAIGN UPDATE

(Oral Report) (PowerPoint Presentation)

The Manager, Business Liaison & Development, Marcia Freeman, gave a PowerPoint presentation to update Committee on the development of the Richmond Awareness Marketing Campaign. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is on file in the City Clerk's Office.

Following the presentation, discussion ensued among Committee members and Ms. Freeman on the proposed campaign, during which she advised that the campaign was well underway and was presented today for the information of the Committee. She added that staff would be presenting the material to the Economic Advisory Task Force at an upcoming meeting in the very near future.

Concern was expressed during the discussion that not all departments, such as Urban Development, had not been included in the marketing campaign. In response, advice was given that the campaign was only a pilot project, and if approved to continue in the future, could be adapted to reflect additional stakeholders. In addressing the concerns, the General Manager, Community Safety, Chuck Gale, advised that any concerns and interests of the committee can be addressed within the campaign. He noted that the proposed marketing campaign had been reviewed and approved by The Administrators' Group.

Discussion then ensued on the rationale for not submitting the proposed marketing campaign to Council prior to its public unveiling. Committee members spoke very highly of the proposed campaign, but some members were of the view that the proposal should have been presented to Council first for approval.

Information was provided during the discussion that the proposed campaign was a framework only and if desired, an "Urban Development" message could be created and inserted into this framework. Reference was made to the upcoming publication of the BC Business magazine, and advice was given that private partners had provided the financing for all but \$2,000 of the cost of placing advertisements in that magazine.

Agreement was expressed by several Committee members that the campaign was extremely professional, contemporary and eye-catching. In response to further questions, Ms. Freeman provided information on how the campaign had been developed, during which she indicated that it had been staff's intention to present the campaign to Council at this stage for information; however, a commitment had to be given to the private partners to launch the campaign in the BC Business magazine.

Ms. Freeman further advised that staff recognized that there were areas which would be added in the future, and added that representatives of all departments had participated in the workshops held to develop the campaign.

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Concern was expressed by the Mayor about the lack of process and the fact that Council had not been given the opportunity to review the campaign prior to its launch. He asked that hard copies of the presentation be provided to all members of Council, and stated that this campaign should be presented to the Economic Advisory Task Force before proceeding any further.

As a result of the discussion which took place, the following motion was introduced:

It was moved and seconded

- (1) *That the "Richmond Awareness Marketing Campaign" (as presented at the April 22nd, 2003 meeting of the General Purposes Committee), be approved in principle as a pilot project;*
- (2) *That the Campaign be presented to the Economic Advisory Task Force for its review; and*
- (3) *That the results of the pilot project be monitored before proceeding further.*

CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded

That the meeting adjourn (6:30 p.m.).

CARRIED

Certified a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee of the Council of the City of Richmond held on Tuesday, April 22nd, 2003.

Mayor Malcolm D. Brodie
Chair

Fran J. Ashton
Executive Assistant, City Clerk's Office

**SCHEDULE A TO THE MINUTES OF
THE GENERAL PURPOSES
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, APRIL 22ND, 2003.**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I would like to respond to the following points from the Staff Report.

Section 1: Background

The Staff Report suggests that the rationale for the sweeping ban on exotic pets is due to the difficulty owners face in providing proper care for exotic animals.

At this time 98% of all birds and more than 70% of all reptiles come from captive breeding programs. This in itself is a testimonial to the level of care given to these exotic animals.

The rationale given by the staff report could easily apply to all pets. The number of dogs, cats, and small pets who find themselves in shelters is greater than exotic animals. In fact at this time the Richmond SPCA currently has no reptiles at their location.

Section 2: Research

The Staff Report suggests by SPCA policy, "the keeping of these animals in captivity is justified only for reasons of conservation, species preservation and education"

Reptiles bred in captivity will ensure the preservation of their species, and the sale of these captive bred reptiles will also ensure that the education surrounding them is maintained.

Section 3: Public Consultation

The most discouraging aspect of the staff report is the apparent lack of consultation with a veterinarian who operates an exotic animal practice. A common concern is animal welfare, so this would make sense to consult a recognized animal care professional to receive their input.

It is mentioned that feedback was sought from local pet stores- Pet Habitat, Super Pet, and Petcetera. I will note that of those stores, Pet Habitat received 1 day to respond, Super Pet was given no notice to respond, Petcetera does not carry reptiles, and at least 2 more pet stores, Aqua fanatics, and Finomenal Fish were also given no opportunity to respond. This poses the question of how accurate the staff report is when missing feedback from so many sources.

Section 4: Recommended Regulatory Approach

Staff Report suggests:

1) Reptiles are often purchased young with their owners not having any idea as to their life expectancy and adult size.

This statement can apply to all pets. Again shelters and pounds are full of dogs and cats resulting from misinformed owners.

2) People often do not understand how to properly care for reptiles.

Again this comment can apply to all different types of pets.

3) It is difficult to find new homes for reptiles, as there are very few places for such animals to go. They end up being released in the wild and threatening natural ecosystems.

There is no evidence to support the claim that these animals are being released in the wild, let alone that they thrive in BC ecosystems.

4) Reptiles pose serious health risks to humans.

They pose no greater risk to humans than your average dog or cat. In fact, in a study conducted by Dr. Shapiro MD, reptiles were found to be less of a risk than a dog or a cat.

Salmonella is a naturally occurring bacterial organism found in the digestive tracks of many animals, including the dog and cat.

Salmonella is also found in restaurants, however no one is suggesting a total ban on restaurants.

To place a ban on reptiles is unfair when reptiles are the least percentage of homeless animals.

The answer lies in education. Posting the proper information in pet stores and shelters. The answer is not a total ban. A total ban only forces reptile enthusiasts to go underground, making education even harder to promote.

Financial Impact:

The Staff Report suggests: None to the City.

Most defiantly there will be an impact. PIJAC Canada has identified 12 pet retail businesses in Richmond that stand to have their sales affected by such a

sweeping ban. Also the operations such as veterinary clinic stand to lose business. Also important to note is the number of people who stand to lose their employment due to this ban.

By banning the sale and keeping of reptiles the city of Richmond is telling its consumers to go and shop elsewhere. A drop in sales will affect Richmond's economy.

Section 5: Alternative Approach

The alternative approach suggested by the staff report is a solution to benefit all who are concerned. There is no discrimination against reptile enthusiasts and education is a high priority. Furthermore I would like to suggest that an addition of only the sale of captive bred reptiles be offered in pet stores.

April 21, 2003

Re: Bylaw No. 7148

I am a reptile owner and have been for several years. To ban the sale of reptiles and other exotics would be detrimental to the pet trade businesses of Richmond as well as the current keepers of these animals. If the shops of Richmond are unable to provide reptiles and exotics, it's most likely they also won't carry the necessary paraphernalia and food such as crickets. The residents of Richmond will have to go to neighbouring cities for their needs. We should be boosting our own economy, not our neighbours.

I fully support your Alternative Approach listed on page 5 of your staff report. Pet stores and breeders should provide the potential buyers with all the information noted as well as a full care sheet and recommended books or websites.

The health risks involved in keeping reptiles are not as serious as made out to be. In your report, the CDC estimates 70,000 people contract salmonella each year from reptiles. The CDC also estimates 2 to 4 million cases of salmonella occur annually in the US from poultry, swine, water, soil, animal feces, raw meats, seafood, etc. Over the last several years I have had Iguanas and Bearded Dragons and have never gotten sick from them (I am the sole cleaner of their enclosures), but I did contract a very serious case of salmonella (sick for 4 months) from a local restaurant 6 years ago.

Conclusion

Education and cleanliness are the key factors in caring for reptiles: read everything you can get your hands on, talk to other caregivers, know your pet and wash your hands after handling and cleaning the enclosure.

Thank you for your time,

Val Lofvendahl
Reptile enthusiast

SCHEDULE C TO THE MINUTES OF
THE GENERAL PURPOSES
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, APRIL 22ND, 2003.

Presentation to General Purposes Committee
City of Richmond
Debra Probert, Executive Director, VHS

April 22, 2003

Thank you for permitting me to make a presentation.

The alternate proposal of regulation and education is not the answer to the problem – the only answer is a complete ban on the sale of reptiles.

I would like to address a couple of points made by previous speakers – one being that CITES, which is an international agreement on the trade in endangered species, is effective in ensuring control over endangered species. CITES is very poorly enforced and we have in the past seen circuses with complete CITES documentation getting into the country – when those certificates were examined, it was noted that the documentation did not match the animals, yet they had passed through the border.

Also, regarding the fact that there are welfare issues with regards to domesticated animals – does that justify adding other species to the list? Do two wrongs make a right?

Response to Councillors Steeves query about whether or not pet stores could be encouraged to carry indigenous species of reptiles – that would be illegal as provincial permits must be issued for indigenous wildlife.

I would like to bring to your attention the opinions of Clifford Warwick who is a world-recognized UK expert on exotic issues, particularly reptiles. It is important to understand that reptiles, whether wild-caught or captive-bred, are animals that have evolved over centuries to a very specific set of environmental circumstances that cannot be met in captivity. Also, reptiles do not exhibit stress as do other animals – they cannot vocalize, and by the time they exhibit distress, they are often very seriously ill.

If I may read from Clifford's report:

"While it is commonplace that local authorities are presented with criticisms from pet traders and keepers whenever legislation seeks to prevent current and future crises, it is important that such legislators appreciate that the authoritative scientific data and opinion supports restrictions on exotic pet trading and pet keeping.

"...there is ample evidence to conclude that the exotic pet trade and pet keeping is directly responsible for substantial animal welfare, human health, and species and

environmental adversities, as well as further established threats of introducing invading wildlife species and pathogens into indigenous ecologies...

"...I offer strong support for the need to legislate against exotic pet keeping in Canada. Such legislation needs to be clear and strong if continuing human health, animal welfare and species and environmental problems are to be avoided or remedied.

"The frequent claim by pet traders and keepers that captive-bred exotic animals (reptiles, birds, amphibians) are not subject to stress because they have been carefully raised and 'conditioned' to captivity is without a scientific basis.

"Studies of captive-bred animals reveal that they succumb to the same stress-related factors that affect wild-caught animals. Therefore, captive-breeding animals merely replaces some stressors of the wild-caught trade with other stressors of captive rearing.

"Stress in captivity is very different. The protective systems that were in place in nature are effectively 'stripped' away by captivity. Accordingly, captive exotic animals manifest a range of states and diseases specifically linked to their presence in artificial conditions. Psychological and behavioural problems are extremely common in exotic pets, although few veterinarians and biologists are actually familiar with these problems. Stress is also responsible for many diseases; these morbidities arising not only from poor husbandry but also in the most prestigious facilities run by highly qualified staff. There are but a handful of scientists in the world today who can reasonably interpret the complex manifestations of captivity-stress in wildlife. A major problem in exotic animal welfare occurs because most biologists, zoo managers, and technicians are unfortunately not aware of their lack of knowledge on behavioural problems, stressors, stress responses and related areas. A far worse 'educational' problem exists in the trade and domestic pet sectors where the grasp of scientific principles as well as the standard of knowledge is not only extremely low but is commonly false."

Statement of support for VHS & ZCCan
Re exotic pet legislation, 2002

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STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

For

Vancouver Humane Society
&
Zoocheck Canada

Exotic pet legislation

Prepared by

Clifford Warwick C.Biol., F.I.Biol., M.I.B.I., EurProBiol.

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Statement of support for VHS & ZCCan
Re exotic pet legislation, 2002

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Summary & Introduction

The exotic pet trade is attracting increasing negative criticism from the scientific and medical fraternities due to a number of serious issues, which include animal welfare, human health, and species and environmental protection. As it stands, there are no established comprehensive or genuine methodologies for eliminating the substantial difficulties of the exotic pet trade and pet keeping, apart from introducing local, national and international bans. National and international agreements are notoriously affected by inertia whereas local authorities are well placed to act responsibly and rapidly to curtail negative consequences.

While it is commonplace that local authorities are presented with criticisms from pet traders and keepers whenever legislators seek to prevent current and future crises, it is important that such legislators appreciate that the authoritative scientific data and opinion supports restrictions on exotic pet trading and pet keeping.

Frequent (and false) arguments by pet keeping proponents include that: animals are not stressed in captivity; animal welfare problems are avoidable; human health is not significantly threatened; species and environmental regulations are sufficient; and exotic pet bans would be counter productive.

However, there is ample evidence to conclude that the exotic pet trade and pet keeping is directly responsible for substantial animal welfare, human health, and species and environmental adversities, as well as further established threats of introducing invading wildlife species and pathogens into indigenous ecologies, and also incurs risks of introducing pathogens that are known to be detrimental to agricultural animals and others.

Bans that have been introduced on the pet trade have demonstrated that such restrictions prove to be the most reliable measures of controlling activity. Also, and importantly, even the 'black-market' in animals (a small component of former large and problematic trade sectors) results in less morbidity and mortality than under-regulated protocols as less crowding of animals occurs and higher prices ensure less speculative buyers. Nevertheless, such markets continue to pose a significant negative influence on all the problematic issues outlined above.

Accordingly, and founded on the evidence-base, I offer strong support for the need to legislate against exotic pet keeping in Canada. Such legislation needs to be clear and strong if continuing human health, animal welfare and species and environmental problems are to be avoided or remedied.

Statement of support for VHS & ZCCan
Re exotic pet legislation, 2002

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Background

At the request of the Vancouver Humane Society and Zoocheck Canada I am herein providing a supporting statement, including commentary and technical information, regarding the current consideration of exotic pet legislation. I have been approached for this statement based on my having relevant professional history and qualifications, which span both reptile biology (and related issues) and human medicine (and related issues) (see Appendix 1).

Inevitably, one can examine only so many issues, but efforts have been made to anticipate the information needs of the legislators and thus this report focuses on some key (and likely to become familiar) points. Appendices and references that are implied are also included either as attachments or as full titles at the end of this document.

Information and opinion in this report is derived entirely from and substantiated by peer-reviewed scientific publications, and selects the most senior and authoritative data sources. Consequently, although it is for the legislators in Canada to decide on the appropriateness of this submission concerning their review of law, the material hereunder is presented free from information biases associated with the pet industry or with exotic pet hobbyists. Accordingly, together with my co-researchers Dr. Phillip Arena and Catrina Steedman—who also support this document—I trust that this provision will offer a core technical summary that allows confident decision-making.

Issues

While there are diverse issues associated with the exotic pet trade and pet keeping, recurring themes include the following:

- a) animal welfare
- b) human health
- c) species and environmental protection

Each of these themes harbours a raft of sub-issues and for each of these there is a great deal of scientific information. The following examples emphasise some of these issues and their diversity.

Statement of support for VHS & ZCCan
Re exotic pet legislation, 2002

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Animal welfare

Wild-caught animals

Wild caught animals usually presented with capture stress; handling stress; transport stress; storage stress, and typically these stresses are repetitious as frequently animals are subjected to movement to other premises or dealers and then re-sold. Essentially, these may be considered as 'in-trade' stresses, in that animals have yet to reach 'private' keepers in the 'domestic' environment'. Stresses, diseases and fatalities due to captivity do, however, permeate the 'system' culminating in the domestic environment and the 'loss of one's pet'. While it is known that wildlife morbidity and mortality arises at all points of the in-trade sector, few specific reports are available that quantify this loss. However, qualified observers report that animal stress, injury, disease and death are commonplace in this trade sector, and good photographic evidence exists to illustrate these findings.

Studies into morbidity and mortality in transport have examined consignments of animals received at airports and have shown that after 48 hours of shipping 3.8% of reptiles were dead on arrival and a similar figure died within the next three days. Other studies reveal that up to 100% of reptiles die in routine consignments. Bird mortality appears broadly similar to that of reptile mortality in some reports and higher than reptiles in some shipments, but while birds may succumb to stress sooner, it is probable that reptiles die later from delayed effects. Causes of death are typically directly related to capture, handling, storage and transport stresses and their associated injury and disease.

Captive-bred animals

The frequent claim by pet traders and keepers that captive-bred exotic animals (reptiles, birds, amphibians) are not subject to stress because they have been carefully raised and 'conditioned' to captivity is without a scientific basis. First, 90—95% of wildlife is wild-caught and not captive-bred. For the small number that are captive-bred, both facilities and husbandry for adults (breeders) and their young are typically intensive-style and highly stressful for animals. Second, many malformations, morbidities and mortalities arise specifically linked to the rearing conditions. Studies of captive-bred animals reveal that they succumb to the same stress-related factors that affect wild-caught animals. Therefore, captive-breeding animals merely replaces some stressors of the wild-caught trade with other stressors of captive rearing.

Statement of support for VHS & ZCCan
Re exotic pet legislation, 2002

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It is indeed unfortunate that exotic pet traders and keepers hold the misperception that so long as animals feed, grow, and reproduce then the husbandry practices in use are acceptable or good. In reality, although an animal may feed, grow and reproduce these 'markers' are in fact not measures or features of an organism's positive harmonisation with captivity, and this is evidenced by results of many studies in which these criteria are met and yet the design of the study includes a stress-causing objective.

Stress and suffering

Of major importance here is the issue of stress and its context. In nature, stress has a well-evolved set of features that form part of an organism's coping mechanisms. There are many 'types' of stress and stressor (causal factor) including hunger or thirst, predation, courtship competition and many others (and these may involve physiological, psychological and physical components), and may be short (acute) or long (chronic) duration occurrences. In their natural context these stress situations are adaptive; allowing the individual certain biological tools that actually help it through a crisis, and such biological strategies persevere right through to an animal's death. Interactions between an animal and its environment are complex, and more may be going on than first appears.

For instance, in nature, although a starving lizard may be stressed due to its physical needs for nutrition, it is nevertheless on an established food search and is 'engaged' in a variety of novel and occupying mandates as part of that search. Among these important positive aspects are: the onset of the situation causing the stress is familiar to the animal—it is aware that prey has been difficult to find and has likely 'been there' before; the general environment has been selected by the lizard; the surroundings have previously probably yielded good results; space is plentiful, offering ongoing and diverse search opportunities; the natural environment presents a multiplicity of biologically familiar stimuli and properly triggered (specifically evolved) responses. Essentially, for the starving lizard in nature there is enough occurring that is both familiar and specific to the very circumstances of its evolved adaptational repertoire and its own individual experiential make-up. In nature, these factors insulate organisms in significant ways from the stresses of life, even if it dies during its search for food. Almost certainly stress in nature contains nothing of what is popularly perceived as 'cruelty'.

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Stress in captivity is very different. The protective systems that were in place in nature are effectively 'stripped' away by captivity. Accordingly, captive exotic animals manifest a range of states and diseases specifically linked to their presence in artificial conditions. Psychological and behavioural problems are extremely common in exotic pets, although few veterinarians and biologists are actually familiar with these problems. Stress is also responsible for many diseases; these morbidities arising not only from poor husbandry but also in the most prestigious facilities run by highly qualified staff. There are but a handful of scientists in the world today who can reasonably interpret the complex manifestations of captivity-stress in wildlife. A major problem in exotic animal welfare occurs because most biologists, zoo managers, and technicians are unfortunately not aware of their lack of knowledge on behavioural problems, stressors, stress responses and related areas. A far worse 'educational' problem exists in the trade and domestic pet sectors where the grasp of scientific principles as well as the standard of knowledge is not only extremely low but is commonly false.

Thus, the exotic pet trade is popularised by individuals whose activities in animal keeping cause massive stress and suffering and these are the worst group of people to recognise or remedy that stress and suffering.

Confusion between exotic pets and domestic pets

It is quite common to find that 'popular' distinction between 'exotic' pets and 'domestic' pets becomes unfortunately or deliberately blurred, with pet-keeping proponents interpreting many exotic animals as domestic by way of their long-term history as a captive pet. Certain animals, such as some herd species and dogs possess what are known as 'pre-adaptive traits'. These are evolved features that to a large extent enable a species to adapt to evolutionarily unfamiliar environments and situations. Relatedly, these pre-adapted types (for example, cattle and dogs) on occasion are capable of sharing their lives with humans in a somewhat favourable arrangement. However, even in this case stress-related problems are often seen and the substantial rise in newly qualified pet behaviourists is a marker of how the human—domesticated animal relationship can still be unsatisfactory. Many other animals do not possess these traits and typically these are the species that are kept as exotic pets—which is clearly an important biological error and responsible for much animal suffering for many years.

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Human health

Concern regarding the keeping of exotic pets and its potential threat to human health is increasing rapidly. While it may be argued that domesticated pets such as cats could be responsible for latent infection of 80% of the population with parasites (Toxoplasma) the actual incidence of disease is not apparent and it may be that the human host versus cat parasite relationship is 'balanced' and biologically self-limiting. However, the prevalence of actual disease related to exotic pet keeping is already clear and fast becoming a worrying topic for everyday epidemiologists. There are many potential pathogens (disease causing agents) carried by exotic pets than can and do cause disease in humans and some of these are outlined in Appendix 2. Certain pathogens are more commonly (or specifically) harboured by exotic animals, while other pathogens are harboured both by domestic and exotic pets. This means that while one can state with confidence that certain diseases are related to exotic pets, some diseases that are thought to be the result of domestic pets may also be linked to exotic pet keeping.

Reptile-related salmonellosis (R.R.S.) is a clear example of exotic pet related disease. Reptiles comprise less than 1% of all pets in the United States but are nevertheless responsible for 7% of all salmonellosis (76,000—140,000 cases of disease), from all sources including all pets, food, and environment. R.R.S. disease is now considered to be a major global public health hazard. Endeavours to educate the public using 'hand-washing' and other preventive measures to control R.R.S. have failed to curtail the disease. The current and increasingly supported option is to widen bans on pet keeping to include all reptiles. Other exotic pet bans may further enhance these proposals and their potential benefits to human health.

It is disturbing that (especially with regard to 'cold-blooded' animals such as reptiles and amphibians—which do not receive any quarantine period) exotic potential pathogens (that may be subject to long-term latency) may be harboured in wild-caught animals and then transported across the world to be on sale within 24 hours of capture.

Species and environmental protection

It is known that there is 'no safe minimum' on human—wildlife collection. A single animal collected from an invading animal collector may be a key individual within

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that ecological niche. For instance, certain essentially terrestrial turtles (Terrapene) manifest 'transient males', that spontaneously roam between different populations and thus spread the genetic diversity in that area. Removal of such an individual turtle may seriously affect the genetic composition of that species in its ecology. Even apparently minimal human invasiveness in nature can have adverse consequences as demonstrated by the presence of researchers on black iguana territoriality. During a scientific study it was noted that eye contact alone between an observer and an iguana was sufficient to radically disrupt important territory-related perching preferences. While initially this may seem a minor matter, disturbance of perching sites may alter a lizard colony's reproductive fitness in nature. Therefore, this example, along with many others illustrates that while blatant large-scale wildlife collection has obvious destructive effects on species protection, subtle invasiveness also may impact negatively.

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Veterinary Specialist Group, Gland, Switzerland, and Office International des
Epizooties. Paris, France.

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Appendix 1

MINI-BIOGRAPHY

Clifford Warwick's qualifications are of the highest professional standard and have been granted specifically for non-invasive research work in **reptilian biology, and biological strategies, and human medicine—zoonoses.**

His specialised areas of herpetology include normal ethology, captive reptile behavioural problems, and captivity-stress and stressors. Clifford is regarded by many to be the world's leading authority on captive reptile behavioural problems and related issues. Additional research projects and publications include euthanasia, anatomy, physiology, wildlife biology, ecology, and species and environmental conservation. His work in human medicine has involved zoonoses prevention education, epidemiological research, primary care management of gastrointestinal disease, fever, and biological strategies in health and disease.

He was made a Fellow of the Institute of Biology for his 'distinction in biological research'. He has produced innumerable publications in biology, behaviour, reptile well-being, and human medicine, a substantial number of which are published in scientific journals and proceedings around the world. Among his publication projects is what is probably the definitive advanced scientific reference book on reptile health and welfare for which he was senior editor and which he co-edited with Prof. Fredric L. Frye (the world's leading authority on reptile medicine) and Dr. James B. Murphy. Clifford is a biological consultant to no less than fifteen scientific, environmental and animal welfare organisations worldwide, as well as governmental departments and scientific advisory panels. He has held several editorial positions, including being a board member of Elsevier's Applied Animal Behaviour Science, and is currently an editorial board member for the Institute of Biology's Biobits publication. In addition, he provides regular specialist advice to veterinarians and independent scientists concerning captivity-related abnormalities and other issues.

In 1992 he received the Intervet/British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Award. He is currently researching human medicine and zoonoses at the University of Leeds.

Attached: condensed publications list.

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Appendix 2. Household pets and some commonly associated pathogenic microorganisms.

Approximately 0.5 percent of households keep one or more reptiles potentially harbouring Salmonella, Cryptosporidium, Citrobacter, Klebsiella, Morganella, Serratia, Staphylococcus, Streptococcus, Yersinia and others keep an average of approximately four fish per person potentially harbouring Campylobacter, Salmonella and E.coli 0157 and others 1.0% have birds potentially harbouring Campylobacter, E.coli 0157 Salmonella, Chlamydia psittaci and and most homes have mammalian pets whether dogs, cats, rats, gerbils and more (potentially harbouring Salmonella, Campylobacter and others.