



Captive wildlife in Ontario

Background

In Ontario, a variety of wild animal species who are potentially dangerous (e.g., tigers, large constrictor snakes) and can pose a disease risk (e.g., primates, parrots) to people and our native environment (e.g., frogs, turtles) are legally permitted to be kept as pets, used for interactions with the public during mobile zoo events and are displayed in unaccredited zoos. Ontario is the last major jurisdiction in Canada that has not regulated the keeping of wild animals, whether it is for pets or for zoos. Instead, this has been downloaded to municipalities, which often lack expertise or resources to address these issues comprehensively. This has resulted in a patchwork of different bylaws across the province, leaving many animals and communities unprotected.

- 42% of all exotic wild animals currently kept as pets in Canada are in Ontario.
- 72% of zoos in Ontario can be classified as roadside zoos.

Legislative solutions under the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act

- Phase-out roadside zoos.
 - Develop and implement a comprehensive and mandatory licensing system for zoo facilities housing exotic wild animals.
 - Implement breeding and acquisition bans during phase-out.
 - Minimum standards to safeguard public safety during phase-out.
- Prohibit inhumane and unsafe direct-animal-visitor interactions as per World Association of Zoos and Aquariums' [guidelines](#), including elephant rides, wildlife selfies and wild animal performances.
- Restrict the breeding, possession, use and sale of wild exotic animals as pets that cannot be humanely kept or are an undue risk to human safety.
 - Adopt a [positive list regulatory framework](#) to regulate keeping, breeding, use and sale of exotic wild animals for pets.

Public support

- 88% of Ontarians support having provincial regulations that would require all zoos to have a license and meet animal welfare and public safety standards.
- 83% of Ontarians support having provincial regulations to restrict the trade of exotic wild animals kept as pets which can pose a danger to human health.
- 72% of Ontarians support provincial regulations that would prohibit zoos and mobile zoos from offering close interactions with wild animals if those activities pose a public health or safety risk to people or animals.