TEXAS Department of State Health Services

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"Lions, Tigers and Bears, Oh My!" Dangerous Wild Animals in Texas

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What is probably one of the most often quoted lines from "The Wizard of Oz" became a true exclamation of fear in a rural Ohio community a little over a year ago (October 2011) when an exotic game owner, in a final act of defiance, released 50+ dangerous wild animals from his property before taking his own life. His actions effectively shut down an entire county and placed its residents in a state of panic. At the time, Ohio had no laws governing the ownership of dangerous wild animals.

It is unknown exactly how many dangerous wild animals are held in private ownership here in Texas. Cities and counties can prohibit these animals (many already have) but the state has had its share of incidents too. Some have been well publicized:

- Tom Green County, 1998 - sympathizers for a biting capuchin named "Ted E. Bear" fought to get its life spared by the courts, only to see it ended two years later when its owner put a bullet in it after it attacked him;
- Harris County, 2000 - a four-year-old boy had his arm bitten off when he reached into the cage of the Bengal tiger owned by his uncle;
- Midland County, 2005 - a macaque owner nearly lost an arm after a male monkey attacked him and escaped before being shot; and
- Ector County, 2011 - another four-year-old boy was mauled by a family member's pet mountain lion.

Lions, monkeys, tigers…do you know who your neighbors are?

Though Texas has a dangerous wild animal law, many are still not well aware of it and little has been done to enforce it. There have also been examples in which actions taken following an incident led to ineffective results because local authorities had not resolved jurisdiction issues. These have become learning experiences for all involved.

Many of the people that have a fascination with owning dangerous wild animals are (usually) not trained animal experts but individuals fulfilling some personal need. Their only guideline for care of these animals lies in the state law that details exactly how they should be housed and managed for the safety of the public as well as the animals. Title 10 of the Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 822, Subchapter E, *Dangerous Wild Animals*, mandates that all 19 species listed in the law, plus their hybrids, be registered with the local animal registration agency (i.e. the city or county animal control office or the sheriff's office in an area that does not have animal control.) The Certificate of Registration comes after the submission of a detailed application and fees, plus an inspection by the sheriff's department based on the requirements found within the accompanying rules in the Texas Administrative Code, 169.131, *Caging Requirements and Standards for Dangerous Wild Animals.*

An example of a registration form and sample certificate can be found at the following link: http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/health/zoonosis/laws/wild/. A sample certificate can also be seen on page 2 .

A thorough description of each animal, identifying photos, the veterinarian's contact information, and a drawing of the property layout indicating where each animal resides are submitted along with the application. Proof of liability insurance coverage must be provided and the $50 fee per animal, up to a maximum of $500 per registering owner, is collected.

Generally, all must have a primary enclosure of sufficient strength to prevent the animal's escape as well as perimeter fencing a minimum of eight feet tall and secured either at or below the ground so as to prevent escape by digging. All primary enclosures less than 1000 square feet shall be covered at the top. There has to be a safety entrance with a double-door mechanism and a lock-down area for the keeper's safety. More specific caging requirements are noted for each species on the list.

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Thorough records documenting veterinary care and animal health and husbandry in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act (7 U.S.C. Section 2131 et seq.) must be made available during the inspection. A separate log must be kept for each dangerous wild animal on the premises.

Upon completion of a successful inspection, the certificate can be issued and it is good for one year. The registrant must forward a copy and the $20 filing fee (per animal) to the Texas Department of State Health Services within 10 days. This process is completed annually.

Whether or not you agree with private ownership of dangerous wild animals, they are a fact of life here in Texas and, therefore, should be of major concern for animal control, law enforcement and the veterinary community. Familiarize yourself with the law now and create your agency's application and certificate so they are ready for use. Don't wait for that phone call asking you, "I've got one; what do I do now?"

CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION FOR A DANGEROUS WILD ANIMAL

Issuance Date _____ Certificate No. _____

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

_____

[Name, Street Address, City, County , State, Zip and Phone Number of Owner]

has registered, the dangerous wild animal(s) listed below pursuant to the requirements of the Texas Health & Safety Code with

_____

[Name, Street Address, City, County, State and Zip of Animal Registration Agency]

Species Sex Age Color, Distinguishing Marks, [illegible], ear notch, tattoo, sterilized, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The location where the animal(s) is kept: _____

(Street Address) (City) (County) (State) (Zip)

Signature of Authorized Official _____

This certificate will expire one year from the issuance date unless revoked for good cause.
This certificate is non-transferable.
This certificate must be publicly displayed at the location where the animal(s) is kept.
A copy of this certificate, plus a filing fee of $20 per animal must be filed with the
Department of State Health Services
Zoonosis Control Branch MC 1956
PO Box 149347
Austin, TX 78714-9347
Within ten days after the issuance date.

Sample

Sample Certificate

After you touch ducklings or chicks, wash your hands so you don't get sick!

- Contact with live poultry (chicks, chickens, ducklings, ducks, geese, and turkeys) can be a source of human *Salmonella* infections.
- *Salmonella* germs can cause a diarrheal illness in people that can be mild, severe, or even life threatening.
- Chicks, ducklings, and other live poultry can carry *Salmonella* germs and still appear healthy and clean.
- *Salmonella* germs are shed in their droppings and can easily contaminate their bodies and anything in areas where birds live and roam.

Protect Yourself and Your Family from Germs

DO:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water right after touching live poultry or anything in the area where they live and roam.
  - Adults should supervise hand washing for young children.
  - If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer until you are able to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Clean any equipment or materials associated with raising or caring for live poultry outside the house, such as cages or feed or water containers.

DON'T:

- Don't let children younger than 5 years of age, elderly persons, or people with weak immune systems handle or touch chicks, ducklings, or other live poultry.
- Don't let live poultry inside the house, in bathrooms, or especially in areas where food or drink is prepared, served, or stored, such as kitchens, or outdoor patios.
- Don't snuggle or kiss the birds, touch your mouth, or eat or drink around live poultry.

For more information, call **1-800-CDC-INFO** or visit **www.cdc.gov.**

USDA

CS222453

Who's Your Local Rabies Control Authority?

From the HSR 11 October 2008 newsletter

The Rabies Control Act, Chapter 826 of the Texas Health and Safety Code, requires each county and municipality to designate a Local Rabies control Authority (LRCA). Persons that may be designated as the LRCA include the county health officer, a municipal health officer, an animal control officer, a peace officer, or any entity that the governing body considers appropriate. The LRCA is responsible for enforcing laws pertaining to rabies control, which include Chapter 826, the rules for Rabies Control and Eradication in Chapter 169 of the Texas Administrative Code, and any rules established by the local municipality or county.

All bites and scratches to people from animals capable of transmitting rabies must be reported to the LRCA, who, in turn, must investigate these potential exposures and suspected rabid animals. The LRCA must be familiar with laws pertaining to rabies, as well as the requirements for animal rabies testing and quarantine. The LRCA makes sure that any high-risk species that may have exposed someone to rabies is sent to the state laboratory for rabies testing. If a domestic dog, cat or ferret is responsible for the bite or scratch, then the LRCA must ensure that the animal is captured and either properly quarantined for the required amount of time or euthanized and tested for rabies. The LRCA determines whether home confinement is allowed for dogs, cats, or ferrets when certain conditions are met, and may also require that an animal that has inflicted multiple bite wounds be tested immediately. The LRCA has the final word regarding the disposition of a biting animal.

Find out who your LRCA is, and make sure that all animal bites and scratches get reported to this person. If no one has been appointed, talk to your local officials about finding someone who can do the job. A form for naming your LRCA is located on page 5. Complete the form and send it to:

Texas Department of State Health Services
Zoonosis Control
WTAMU Box 60968
Canyon, Texas 79016-0968
or
FAX: 806-655-6448

The _____ of _____
(governing body) (city or county)

designates _____ as the Local Rabies Control
(job title or name)

Authority (LRCA) for the purposes of the RABIES CONTROL ACT OF 1981.

This appointment became effective _____.
(date)

AUTHORIZING PERSON'S NAME (print):_____

AUTHORIZING PERSON'S TITLE:_____

AUTHORIZING PERSON'S SIGNATURE:_____

Please print the name and contact information of the appointed individual:

NAME:_____

AGENCY:_____

STREET ADDRESS:_____

MAILING ADDRESS:_____

CITY/STATE/ZIP:_____

JOB TITLE:_____

TELEPHONE:_____ FAX:_____

E-MAIL ADDRESS:_____

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DSHS FREE PUBLICATIONS

Those who have access to the internet can order DSHS publications online. The Zoonosis Control Branch has pamphlets on a variety of topics, such as mosquito control, rabies, animal bites, plague, encephalitis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and tick borne diseases. You can search for publications by title, subject, keyword, language, format or publications number, and pamphlets will be shipped to you at no cost. To order pamphlets online, visit the website:

http://webds.dshs.state.tx.us/mamd/litcat/default.asp

If you have any questions, please call Tonya at (806) 655-7151 ext. 1104.

63rd Annual James Steele Conference on Diseases in Nature Transmissible to Man (DIN)

For complete conference information, including the registration form, please visit the conference website at http://sites.google.com/site/diseasesinnature/.