



Regulating Exotic Pets

An introduction to the Pet Positive List

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A close-up, black and white photograph of a cat's face. The image is partially obscured by a large black rectangular box on the left side, which contains white text. The visible parts of the cat's face include its eye, whiskers, and the tip of its nose.

Reasons to regulate exotic pets



Animal Welfare



Consumer & Community Safety



EVERGLADES INVASION

Protecting Local & Global Environments

Moncton Bylaw

- None on municipal level
- Provincial Act is under development since 2015:
 - Permit required to keep exotic pet
 - Biggest challenges: establishing assessment criteria and categorizing animals



Toronto Bylaw

16 Mammal
orders/families

6 bird
orders/families

Crocodylia

Snakes ≥ 3
meters

Lizards ≥ 2
meters

All venomous
and poisonous
animals

Issues Use of Negative List

- Animal Welfare Implications:

- Needs of the animal are not considered
- Danger to humans generally main consideration
- Focus on mammals



Legislation in Numbers: Snakes

- 3,709 known snake species
- ± 600 classified as venomous
- ± 10 species can reach ≥ 3 meters in length
- This results in: ± 3099 species which can be kept as pets
- Domesticated dogs: 1 species consists of 340 breeds

Issues Use of Negative List

- Animal Welfare Implications:
 - Needs of the animal are not considered
 - Danger to humans generally main consideration
 - Focus on mammals
- Concerns for local and non-local habitats:
 - Fails to address habitat threats
- Long lists, confusing for the general public:
 - Knowledge of taxonomy required
 - Classification errors



Issues Use of Negative List

- Enforcement feasibility:
 - Burden of proof on municipalities
 - Must be proven that animal has unacceptable negative impact on humans, animals and/or the environment
- Reactive instead of preventive:
 - Trailing behind pet industry trends
 - Substantial problems need to materialize before measures are taken



What are the Alternatives?

- Ban keeping and sale of all exotic animals:
 - With or without grandfathering of animals
- Require acceptable husbandry standards
- Positive list



What is the Positive List?

- Regulates the animals a person can keep as a pet
- Based on established criteria
- Evidence based approach, relying on science
- Precautionary principle





Criteria:

Animals must be suitable to be kept as pets



Potential to
inflict physical
harm



Risk of
Zoonoses



Risk of
Invasiveness
and/or novel
diseases



Not wild caught
instead:
Self-sustaining
captive population



Ability to rehome
unwanted pets

Positive List Implementation

- Which list should be implemented?
- Analyze exotic pets in your community
- Establish Animal Welfare Review Panel
- Establish Sub-committees:
 - Responsible for reviewing species
- Review Panel advises government:
 - Also responsible for reviews and requests



Positive List Effects



Consumers



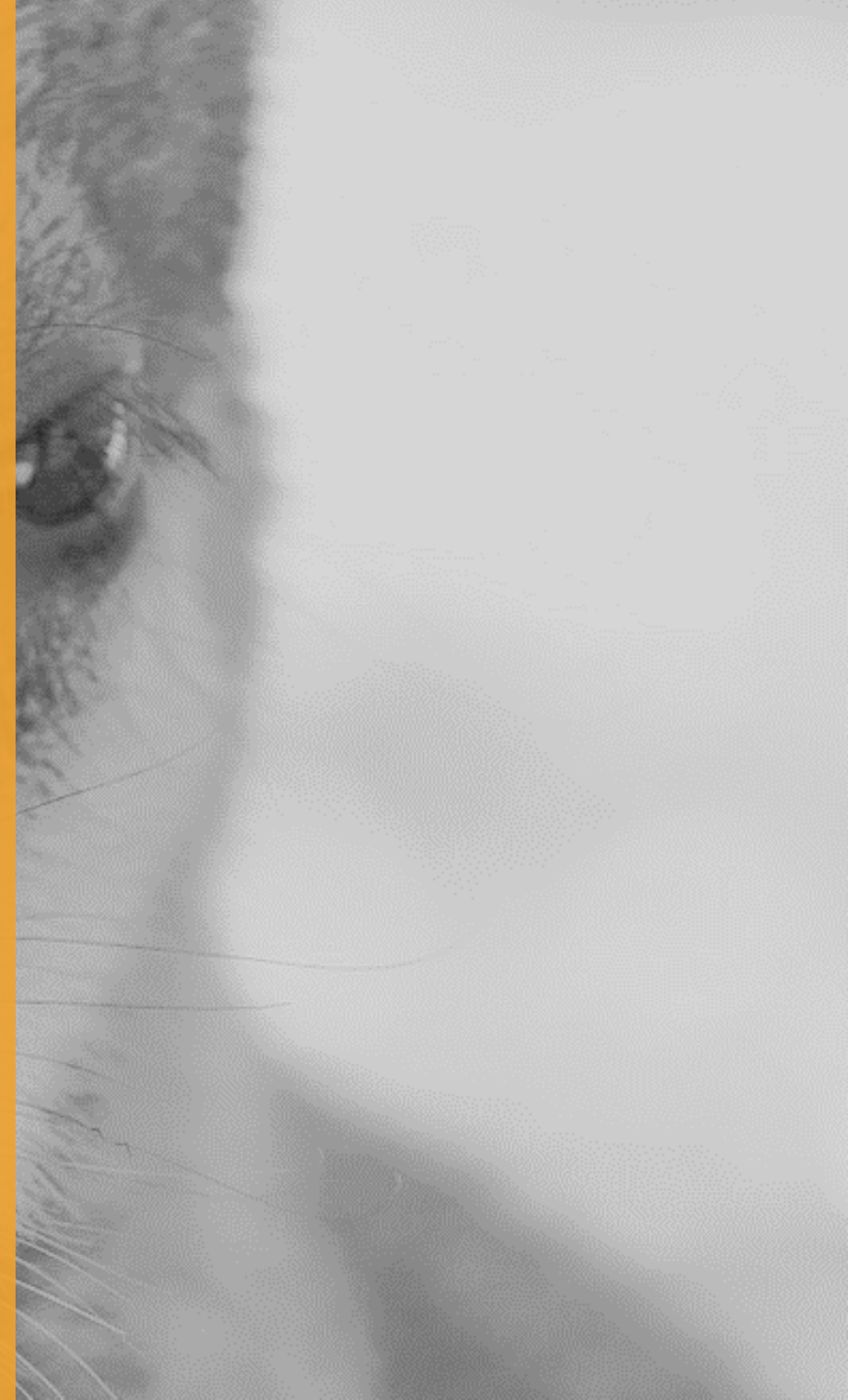
Community



Animals



Environment



The Positive list in Practice - Belgium

- Inspired by the Dutch “not, unless” principle
- Criteria Mammal positive list:
 - Easy to keep
 - No threat to local fauna
 - No danger humans / others
 - Availability of information
 - Pre-cautionary principle

Belgium – Animal Review Committee

- Zoo representatives
- Biologists
- Veterinarians
- Animal Protection Organizations
- Consumers/hobbyists
- Pet industry representatives
- University professors

Belgium - Sequence of Events

- 1995: Principle of positive list was accepted
- 2001: Positive list of 42 species
- Issues → Challenged in European Court – unfair trade
- 2016: Implementation of list
- Results → Illegal animals are not visible on the streets
- Future → Reptile positive list
Added criteria, must be captive bred.

TIP: BE PRAGMATIC

Case Study 2: The Netherlands

- 2014: 280 mammals identified as being privately owned
- 2015: Implementation of the positive list
- 2016: Revision of positive list

- Animals categorized in Risk Categories:
 - Very high risk to negligible risk
 - “Easy to keep” criteria are specified and analyzed

Risk Assessment Example: Fennec Fox



- **Criteria:** Living space
- **Risk:** Digging opportunities
- **Consequence:** 28% of individuals will display stereotypes
- **Risk level without specific housing features:** **HIGH**
- **Risk level with specific housing features:** **LOW**
- **Husbandry requirement:** Substrate depth must be $\geq 20\text{cm}$ and be loose enough for the animal to dig

2017: The Dutch Positive list in trouble

- Positive List Expert Committee consisted of stakeholder representatives and therefore not impartial
- Procedure of Positive List Advisory Committee was not sufficient transparent
- Not sufficient due diligence to determine if recommendations were developed with care
- Future: ???



Let's be positive!

Thank you for
your time