

**REPORT OF A
COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE COMMISSIONER OF THE VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE TO STUDY THE PRO-
LIFERATION OF COMPOUNDS FOR THE PUBLIC EXHIBITION OF BOTH
NATIVE AND EXOTIC WILD ANIMALS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF THE
NEED FOR REGULATION OF SUCH ACTIVITIES**

**TO
THE GOVERNOR
AND
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 10

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Department of Purchases and Supply
Richmond**

1975

To: HONORABLE MILLS E. GODWIN, Governor of Virginia

and

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA

This report, which covers the Proliferation of Wild and Exotic Animal Compounds is respectfully submitted as requested by Senate Joint Resolution No. 77 passed by the 1974 General Assembly.

The study was carried out by a special committee of competent veterinarians and others who have had many years of experience in this field. They worked hard and diligently in reviewing the situation, and I want to respectfully thank all of them for their time and efforts.

I would like to particularly call your attention to the recommendations contained in Section IV of the report to amend the appropriate portions of the law extending the responsibilities of this Department and the State Veterinarians Office as they relate to animal disease control to cover the regulation of wild and exotic animal compounds.

It is hoped that these recommendations will receive favorable consideration, and will be enacted into law.

Sincerely,



S. Mason Carbaugh
Commissioner

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE

George B. Estes, D. V. M.

W. A. Truban, D. V. M.

John B. Larus

Theodore H. Reed, D. V. M.

Oscar F. Claubaugh, D. V. M.

R. A. Barton, D. V. M.

Dr. Peter Dalby

James F. McInteer, Jr.

Don Dietlein

Les Schobert

CONSULTANTS TO THE COMMITTEE

C. W. Gray, D. V. M.

Animal Health and Pathology
National Zoological Park
Washington, D. C.

Larry Mather

Lion Country Safari
Doswell, Virginia

Jerry Lentz

National Zoological Director
Busch Gardens
Tampa, Florida

J. A. Finnegan, D. V. M.

Veterinarian
Busch Gardens
Williamsburg, Virginia

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PROLIFERATION
OF WILD AND EXOTIC ANIMAL COMPOUNDS AND RECOM-
MENDATIONS FOR REGULATION OF SUCH ACTIVITIES

I. INTRODUCTION

This report is a result of the study directive contained in Senate Joint Resolution No. 77 passed by the 1974 Session of the General Assembly as follows:

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 77

Whereas, increasing interest is developing on the part of the general public in viewing wild animals, both those indigenous to this continent and exotic animals imported from other parts of the world; and

Whereas, the development of zoological parks, zoological gardens, wild animal safaris, wild animal compounds, and similar enterprises by both private and public interests is proliferating; and

Whereas, a trend seems to be developing towards holding and maintaining such animals for public viewing in a habitat and environment as near to the natural habitat and environment of such animals as possible; and

Whereas, the possibility of harm to the public or exposure of our domestic animals and poultry or our native wild animals to infectious and contagious diseases and parasites may develop as a result of such operations; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Department of Agriculture and Commerce is hereby authorized and directed to make a study of the importation into Virginia of wild animals native to this continent and of exotic wild animals not normally native to this continent for the purpose of holding such animals in captivity for public viewing or for breeding or for any other purpose as either a public enterprise or a private enterprise for commercial reasons.

The Department is authorized to call upon any other State department or agency that may have an interest in these matters for assistance and advice, and may also utilize the services of private persons or organizations having knowledge, expertise, and interest in these matters.

The Department of Agriculture and Commerce is directed to make its report to the General Assembly of Virginia, which shall include the results of each study, along with its recommendations, if any, regarding needed legislation providing for the proper control of the importation of such animals into the Commonwealth, the proper handling and restraint of such animals while being held for exhibition, whatever measures are deemed necessary for the protection of the general public, the Commonwealth's domestic livestock and poultry, and other matters directly relating to this activity.

The Department shall complete its study and make its report not later than November one, nineteen hundred seventy-four.

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The Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce appointed the following as members of a committee to make the study as directed by the resolution: George B. Estes, D.V.M., Assistant State Veterinarian, Richmond, Virginia, Chairman; Senator W. A. Truban, D.V.M., Woodstock, Virginia; John B. Larus, Member of Board of Agriculture and Commerce, Richmond, Virginia; Theodore H. Reed, D.V.M., Director of National Zoological Park, Washington, D.C.; Oscar F. Claubaugh, D.V.M., United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.; R. A. Barton, D.V.M., Ashland, Virginia; Peter Dalby, Ph.D., Department of Biology, V.P.I. and S.U., Blacksburg, Virginia; James F. McInteer, Jr., State Game Commission, Richmond, Virginia; Don Dietlein, Lion Country Safari, Doswell, Virginia; and Les Schobert, Busch Gardens, Williamsburg, Virginia.

II. PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study was felt necessary in response to the concern of the general public in that wild and exotic animal compounds were proliferating throughout the state, and there were no existing standards or controls enacted by any state agency concerning these compounds.

Concern had also been expressed to the State Veterinarian's Office and to other regulatory officials of the possibility of escape of wild animals from compounds. The main fear expressed by individuals was, however, that with the introduction of foreign animals into the area could also come the introduction of new, exotic diseases that could be transmitted directly to indigenous animals or domestic livestock.

III. BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF FACTS

A. Review of Historical Developments re Compounds in State and Nationally

The first African safari compound, where the animals roam freely within the compound, started in 1965 in West Palm Beach, Florida. The general idea of the compound was to provide for the benefit of the American public a simulated safari on a limited acreage.

From Florida, the lion country safari-type compound then developed in California, Texas, and Georgia. Development followed in Virginia with the first compound at Doswell, Virginia, and there is one in Ohio and one planned for the Chicago area.

The above included only the lion country safari-type animal compounds. There are several other types of animal compounds in the Nation that this Committee knows of, but these are not considered relevant to this report.

B. Summary of Situation in Other States

As far as this Committee can determine, Virginia is the only state approaching the regulation of exotic animal compounds from a legislative

standpoint except New York. New York has legislation proposed, but not yet in force. California, at present, appears to be leaning toward legislating control of exotic animals.

Virginia, then, seems to be in the forefront in seeking to regulate exotic animal compounds.

C. Rationale Which Led to Introduction of Study

The need for this study became evident after many people expressed concern that exotic animals in these compounds might be carriers of dangerous foreign diseases that could be transferred to native animals and domestic livestock.

Especially area people--those located in the vicinity of an exotic animal compound--feared that compound animals could harbour diseases such as Foot and Mouth, African Swine Fever, or African Horse Sickness. And these citizens feared that their horses or cattle could be infected by these diseases. They were worried about exotic ticks, parasites--other disease carriers of this nature.

When the Doswell compound was being established, the Hanover Board of Supervisors first had to be assured that the exotic animals being brought into the facility were not also bringing with them exotic diseases that could spread to county livestock.

The people who expressed concern over these animal compounds and the possibility of spread of any exotic disease demonstrated a complete lack of knowledge of standard quarantine procedures that these animals have to undergo before they come into the country. These same people are also alarmed when they learn that the State Veterinarian's Office has no jurisdiction over these exotic animals.

D. Expertise and Knowledge of Committee Members

The names and titles of the membership of this Committee, as appointed by the Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, are shown in Part I of this report.

It was decided from the beginning that the membership of this Committee be composed of persons with training, background, and experience in animal health and related matter.

Most of the members are veterinarians with years of experience. There are representatives of State and Federal government; veterinarians in private practice; an educator; veterinarians and others actually employed at exotic animal compounds and the National Zoological Park; a State legislator and veterinarian; and a member of the State Board of Agriculture and Commerce.

In addition to the regular Committee, a great deal of expertise was provided by other participants, referred to as Consultants to the Committee.

E. Thoroughness of Study

All appropriate statutes regarding exotic animals, animal medicine, quarantine procedures, and animal welfare were circulated to all Committee members for their study, apart from the general meeting context.

The information covered much of the activities of the Federal government as far as their work in the prevention of the introduction of exotic animal diseases into the continental United States--such diseases as African Horse Sickness, Foot and Mouth Disease, and Bovine Plueral Pneumonia.

The Committee's investigation and study shows that there were no applicable Federal statutes and/or regulations to fill this need for the regulation of exotic animals within Virginia.

F. Extent to Which Federal Programs and Requirements Were Considered

Existing Federal programs were explored (as referenced in Section E. above) and generally found lacking on the State level for the problem under study.

The Committee sees the need to amend State law in order to verify the position of the State Veterinarian, giving him ability to enter into control procedures when a disease occurs or is suspected in exotic animals. Under present statute, the State Veterinarian lacks legal authority to quarantine or to destroy, or to take any action to contain problem areas that may arise among exotic animals.

The Committee believes that an amendment to State statute would compliment those Federal regulations that are already in effect, but which are not defined amply enough to handle the situation in Virginia. The proposed State amendment would allow cooperation between State and Federal veterinarians on any exotic animal problem.

Additionally, the Committee found that the Federal government does not have adequate staff locally to enforce the applicable regulations that do exist. There is only one veterinarian in Virginia who performs in the area of exotic animal regulation.

G. Justification of the Need for Action Now

The Committee believes that the Commonwealth needs control over exotic animal exhibitions now before a real proliferation takes place, with concomitant problems that may occur. We think Virginia should be ahead of this situation--to anticipate and act now--not just react to problems that may occur in the near future.

If the State Veterinarian's Office is given regulatory control in this area, we think it will encourage a more orderly, controlled establishment of

future animal parks, and encourage responsible actions on the part of those engaging in this business.

The Committee believes that this amendment of State statute would be good planning to meet a future need--a need we feel sure will soon come.

We have established that other states are concerned about exotic animal compounds, and are now either taking action on the matter, or certainly beginning to think about taking action. We have also shown that the proposed State amendment would compliment Federal regulations and allow State and Federal veterinarians and allied regulatory officials to work together on exotic animal problems that may--and in all likelihood, will--occur in the future.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Agriculture and Commerce recommends that the Title 3.1 Chapter 27 Article 1 of the Code of Virginia be amended to provide the State Veterinarian with the same authority and control over wild and exotic animals that he now has over domestic animals and poultry (see attachment "A").

The general public has become increasingly concerned whether or not wild and exotic animal compounds have adequate facilities to protect the public from possible harm. The livestock public has become concerned whether or not these animal compounds have proper animal disease programs to protect the domestic animals within the state. Although the United States Department of Agriculture has an animal welfare act, it is felt that this act does not provide adequate protection to the people of the state.

As these compounds become more numerous and the legitimate and financially responsible operations become larger and attract larger numbers of viewers, it is predicted that there will follow many small, irresponsible, temporary fly-by-nighters which would definitely be a threat to the welfare of the viewing public and to the domestic animals and poultry of the state.

ATTACHMENT "A"

SENATE BILL _____

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 1, Chapter 27, of Title 3.1 a section numbered 3.1-741.1, to provide for extension of the authority of the Board of Agriculture and Commerce, and the State Veterinarian, to include native and exotic wild animals and birds.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 1, Chapter 27, of Title 3.1 a section numbered 3.1-741.1 as follows:

Section 3.1-741.1 Extension of authority and control of Board of Agriculture and Commerce, and State Veterinarian, to include native and exotic wild animals and birds. --- In each instance where the terms "livestock and/or poultry," "domestic animals and/or poultry," and "animals and or poultry" are used in this Article, these terms shall be construed to include native and exotic wild animals and birds, including those wild animals and birds which are indigenous to this State, which are being held in captivity and maintained for public viewing or for other purposes.

