

## **Dangerous and Wild Animals**

No person may keep any dangerous wild animal without first obtaining a licence from their local authority. This aims to ensure that where private individuals keep dangerous wild animals they do so in circumstances which create no risk to the public and which safeguard the welfare of the animals.

A "Dangerous Wild Animal" is defined as any animal which is included on the list of animals defined in the schedule of Kinds of Dangerous Wild Animals specified in the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 (Modification) Order 1981.

The following are a few examples:-

- Snakes (POISONOUS ONLY e.g. Cobra, Krait, Mamba, Sea Snakes, Death Adder, Vipers, Adders, Rattlesnakes, Water Moccasins and Copperheads) - please note that Constrictor Snakes are not included on the list)
- Tigers
- Chimpanzees
- Wild Dogs
- Wolves (including Wolf-Dog Hybrids)
- Buffalo
- Camels
- Giant Panda
- Moose
- Cheetah
- the EMU
- Elephants
- Ostrich

*NB this is not an exhaustive list; the schedule should be consulted if you have any doubts about a particular animal.*

## **Licensing to Keep Exotic, Dangerous or Wild Animals**

Any application made to a local authority for a licence must be made (unless in exceptional circumstances) by the person who is proposed to own and possess the animal and they must:

- Specify the species and number of animals to be kept
- Specify the premises where the animals will normally be kept
- Be made to the local authority for those premises
- Be made by a person 18 years of age or over and not disqualified from holding a licence under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976
- Be accompanied by a fee stipulated by the local authority at a level sufficient to meet the direct and indirect costs involved.

Before granting any licence the local authority is required to consider an inspection report of the premises produced by a veterinary surgeon. There is also an annual application fee of £100 plus a non-refundable vet's fee.

The licence will expire on the 31st December of the year to which the licence relates. It must be renewed before that date if the licence holder is to continue to keep the animal(s) named on the licence.

The exotic, dangerous or wild animals licensing procedure does not apply to animals kept in:

- a zoological garden
- circus
- pet shop
- Places registered under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 for the purpose of performing experiments.
- A person is held to be the keeper of the animal if he has it in his possession and the assumption of possession continues even if the animal escapes or it is being transported etc. This removes the need for carriers or veterinary surgeons to be licensed.  
These premises are subject to separate licensing requirements.

## **The Council's Duties**

Before granting a licence the local authority must be satisfied that:

1. It is not contrary to the public interest on grounds of safety, nuisance or other grounds.
2. The applicant is a suitable person to hold a licence to keep the animal(s) listed on the application.
3. The animal(s) will be kept in accommodation that prevents its escape and is suitable in respect of size, temperature, drainage and cleanliness.
4. The animal(s) will be supplied with adequate and suitable food, drink and bedding material and be visited at suitable intervals.
5. Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure the protection of the animal(s) in case of fire or other emergency.
6. All reasonable precautions are taken to prevent the spread of infectious disease.
7. The animal(s) accommodation is such that it can take adequate exercise.
8. Where the Council issues a licence, that licence is subject to such conditions as the Council sees fit and in each case these conditions will specify that:
  - a) Only the person named on the licence shall be entitled to keep the animal.
  - b) The animal shall only be kept on the premises named on the licence.
  - c) The animal shall not be moved or may only be moved in accordance with conditions specified in the licence.
  - d) The licensee must hold a current insurance policy, approved by the Council, which insures against liability for damage caused by the animal.
  - e) Only the species and number of animals listed on the licence may be kept.
  - f) The licensee shall make a copy of the licence and its contents available to any other person listed on the licence as being able to look after the animal.
9. The council may at any time revoke or amend any licence condition apart from those covered by 8 a) to 8 f) above.

On the death of a licence holder, the licence continues in the name of the personal representatives for 28 days only and then expires unless application is made for a new licence within that time, in which case it continues until the new application is determined.

## **Disqualification's and Cancellations**

Where a person is convicted of an offence under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 or under:

- Protection of animals Act 1911-1964;
- Protection of Animals (Scotland) Act 1912-1964;
- Pet Animals Act 1951;
- Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963;
- Riding Establishments Act 1964-1970;
- Breeding of Dogs Act 1973.
- The court may cancel any licence he may hold to keep a dangerous wild animal and disqualify him, whether or not he is current holder, from holding such a licence for such a period as the court thinks fit. The cancellation or disqualification may be suspended by the court in the event of an appeal.

Anybody found guilty of keeping an animal covered by the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 without a licence to do so or anybody found guilty of failing to comply with any licence condition shall be subject to a fine not exceeding £2,000.

Any person found guilty of obstructing or delaying an Inspector or authorised Veterinary Practitioner or Veterinary Surgeon shall be subject to a fine not exceeding £2,000.

## **Power of Entry and Seizure of Animals**

If a dangerous wild animal is being kept without the authority of a licence or in contravention of a licence condition, the local authority may seize the animal and retain it, destroy it or otherwise dispose of it. The local authority is not liable to compensation and may recover costs from the keeper of the animal at the time of this seizure.

Local authority's may authorise competent persons to enter premises either licensed under the Act or specified in an application for a licence, at all reasonable times, producing if required their authority, and the authorised officers may inspect these premises and an animal in them.

Any person found guilty of obstructing or delaying an Inspector or Authorised Veterinary Practitioner shall be subject to a fine not exceeding £2000.

Your Rights of Appeal

Any person aggrieved by a refusal to be granted a licence or by any conditions to which the licence is subject, may appeal to the Magistrates Court and the Courts may give such direction regarding the licence and its conditions as it thinks proper.

## **Further Information**

Copies of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 and other legislation mentioned in this information sheet can be purchased from Her Majesty's Stationary Office.