



ZOOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
OF AMERICA

February 18, 2025

Jenny Gilbert
Legislative Liaison
Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
Arnold L. Mitchell Building
#1 Sportsman's Lane
Frankfort, KY 40601
fwpubliccomments@ky.gov

Re: Comments on requirements for transportation and holding of live exotic wildlife

Dear Ms. Gilbert

The Zoological Association of America (ZAA) submits the following comments on the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (DFWR) proposed changes to 301 KAR 2:082. We ask that these public comments be made part of the Fish and Wildlife Commission's review of the proposed regulations. Our primary concern is that the regulations would provide an unfair and arbitrary benefit to one accrediting organization at the expense of others.

ZAA is a non-profit, membership-based accrediting organization dedicated to responsible wildlife management, conservation and education. Our organization, which was formed in 2005, upholds the highest level of professional standards in animal welfare, safety and ethics. ZAA consists of and represents hundreds of zoological professionals who work in zoos, aquariums, conservation breeding facilities, and conservation education-based animal ambassador programs. ZAA zoos and aquariums annually provide millions of visitors with educational opportunities, and support conservation of both native and exotic species.

ZAA has more than seventy accredited facilities counting among its members many of the finest facilities in the United States. All contribute to global wildlife conservation education and conduct programming designed to help the public connect with wildlife and understand the vital importance of preserving it. ZAA's stringent accreditation process establishes an extremely high bar with respect to professional animal standards, best management practices and exemplary animal care and welfare and focuses on staff, animal, and guests' safety; animal care, welfare, and husbandry; state and federal compliance; veterinary care; nutrition; enrichment; security; facility maintenance; recordkeeping; and a review of policies, procedures, and protocols.

The ZAA accreditation program maintains a benchmark for standards of operation and surpasses the standards of state minimum requirements and the federal Animal Welfare Act. At the same time, all ZAA

accredited facilities are also United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) licensed Class C Exhibitors and many also hold permits from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Comments on Proposed Regulations

Section 5 (1) provides that a facility that is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) shall not be required to obtain a transportation permit for exotic wildlife and shall be allowed to import, possess, and transport into Kentucky federally endangered species and the prohibited exotic species listed in the regulation.

Providing preferential regulatory treatment to the members of only one zoological association but not to non-members is outdated and unnecessary and should be revised. There is no reasonable basis for providing such favorable treatment to one private trade association and its members as compared to other similarly situated zoos. There are other nationally recognized professional organizations that accredit or certify zoos and aquariums. This includes not only ZAA, but also the Alliance of Marine Parks and Aquariums and the American Humane Association, among others. In fact, AZA and ZAA accreditation standards pertaining to animal welfare and public safety are comparable and multiple zoos in the U.S. today are actually accredited by both associations. Further, all zoos that are open to the public, regardless of size or affiliation, are required to be licensed and inspected by the USDA under the Federal Animal Welfare Act. The USDA has regulations that touch on all aspects of animal care and the rules are the same for everyone.

We believe the above section and the proposed regulations in general should be revised to say "**accredited or certified zoos**" without referencing specific membership organizations. We believe such an approach would make more sense and be more fair than the current version which may unfairly and unreasonably exclude multiple zoological organizations and facilities. In the alternative, ZAA would request that at a minimum the regulations be revised to provide equal recognition of accreditation by ZAA. Providing such equitable treatment is reasonable and justified by the fact that ZAA and AZA standards are comparable and all zoological facilities must meet the same minimum federal standards.

Thank you for your time and attention. Please contact me if you have any questions. You can also visit www.zooassociation.org for more information about ZAA and its accreditation standards.

Sincerely,



Kelly George, Phd.
Executive Director