



April 3, 2017

Council Member David Ryu
Los Angeles City Hall,
Room 425 200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Council File: 16-1357
Prohibition on the Exhibit of Wild or Exotic Animals for Entertainment or Amusement

Dear Council Member Ryu,

It has come to my attention that the City of Los Angeles is looking into how to manage exotic animals that are in the City for educational, entertainment and work related reasons. It's good the City is addressing this issue and I would like to aid in helping understand the animal side of this matter. Although we are not based in the Los Angeles area, we do bring our animals into the City for events.

When I was in 7th grade, I had a visitor in my world geography class that made a profound impression on my life. A gentleman was invited to bring a Mt. Lion to my class. It put me on a course that would impact many 100's of thousands of people and raise many 100's of thousands of dollars to save cats in the wild. I am not sure any of that would have ever happened without that live encounter with the cougar. I have letters from researchers, PhD and other professionals that work to save animals in the wild stating how important it is for people to make a live connection with animals that then inspires them to get involved with conservation efforts. (letters attached)

I have been working with exotic cats for more than 25 years. The facility I built is called Project Survival, a public non-profit 501 c 3 organization, it is located about 40 miles East of Fresno, CA and is open to the public. We house 34 cats representing 13 species from tigers, lions, cheetahs to small cats like jaguarundis. We are often asked to have the cheetah come do programs in the LA area to help raise funds and awareness for people like Dr. Laurie Marker, Founder of the Cheetah Conservation Fund, and also educational programs for children and adults alike. We have had many different cats on Leno, Kimmel, Conan and Ellen, to name a few and have done multiple photo shoots for different companies.

We are licensed by the federal government by USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), and the State of California Department of Fish and Wildlife as are all organization that have animals in the State of California. These are the **only** governing agencies that are charged to look out for the welfare of animals. Any other groups are private organizations such as the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) or American Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) that have no regulatory authority over anyone or organizations except those who join their organizations. USDA and CDFW have standards for animal care and transportation.

Some people will try to paint a picture that all entertainment animals are treated poorly and abused by their handlers and that is patently untrue. We care deeply for animals and work very hard to make a good life for them. Just because we take them places to give people a unique experience does not equal abuse. Many of the organizations and people that support a ban want you to believe that my animals are mistreated and pose an enormous risk to both people and the animal itself. It is just not true. The federal government passed a law in 2007 that prohibits the direct contact of big cats and the public, the Haley Act. The risk is minimal and you are more likely to die from a bee sting (average 53 per year) than any exotic animals under supervision of a handler. I believe these organizations and people that want to ban animals think they are looking out for the

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best interest of the animals, but they are looking at this issue from an outsider's point of view or have an agenda that is miss guided. I applaud their caring for animals but they have not seen the joy people have and kids' faces when a cat walks in the room.

With that said let me be clear, regulations are good and I commend the City of Los Angeles for taking action, but do not make the mistake other cities have made and ban exotic animals outright. There are many great benefits in taking animals to events. Education and conservation involvement is important in helping to ensure the survival of these creatures. Most of the people in the Los Angeles area do not have the resources to travel to places where these animals live wild. The world needs to be brought to them to feel the emotion of animals and desire to work to save them. I want to bring a message of hope with my animals, not a message of doom and gloom. When this is done by responsible caring people, the results are positive just as it was for me many years ago.

I would propose that everyone bringing an exotic animal to be used for any purpose in the City of Los Angeles be;

1. Licensed by the USDA
2. Permitted by the State of California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Additional permits are already required by LA Animal Services. They require verification of all the documentation health certificate for a licensed veterinarian, proof of liability insurance, a public safety plan, details of the event, emergency vet address and phone number and a description of the confinement during transportation.

I think the City of Los Angeles already has a good system in place to deal with activities of trained professionals handling exotic animals in your area.

Sincerely,

Dale Anderson
Founder and Ex. Director
Project Survival