

Regulation Recommendations for the Possession of Potentially Dangerous Reptiles

On January 17, 2007 the Policy, Regulation and Trade Committee of NCPARC completed its recommendations on how the State of North Carolina should handle potentially dangerous reptiles. Potentially dangerous reptiles were classified into three groups: large constrictors, crocodylians and venomous reptiles. Definitions of each group and recommended regulations for each group are listed below.

Implicit in these recommendations is that they apply to the private, personal ownership of potentially dangerous reptiles. These recommendations are not intended for institutions including, but not limited to: public zoos, aquariums, museums, nature centers and other public educational institutions; universities and colleges and other research facilities; veterinarians, veterinary and rehabilitation facilities; and state and federal agencies. Note: Pet Shops are included in these regulations to the extent that they must obtain and retain a copy of the buyer's permit and/or license in order to legally sell any reptile listed as potentially dangerous. In addition, they must follow the safety and housing protocols associated with potentially dangerous reptiles outlined in these recommendations.

Large Constrictors

Potentially dangerous large constrictors are limited to the following 5 species (including all subspecies of each): Reticulated Python (*Python reticulatus*); Burmese Python (*Python molurus*); African Rock Python (*Python sebae*); Amethystine or Scrub Python (*Liasis amethystinus*); and Green Anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*).

NCPARC recommends that these large constrictors be regulated by requiring a renewable annual permit in order to possess them. We further recommend the following permit regulations.

- 1) The applicant must be 18 years old or older and provide proof of age in the form of a copy of the applicant's driver's license or other valid photo id.
- 2) In order to renew a large constrictor permit the applicant must submit an annual report to the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission including: what species they are requesting the permit for; the number of animals of each species in possession; and if breeding, the number of offspring produced and the disposition of those offspring.
- 3) Permittees may not sell, trade, or give away large constrictors, or their offspring, to non-permitted individuals within the State of North Carolina. Permittees are responsible for obtaining and retaining a copy of the buyers permit before selling, trading or giving away any regulated large constrictor.
- 4) Grandfathering: Large constrictor owners will have one year from the date the permit system goes into affect to apply for a large constrictor permit for animals already in their possession. Individuals opting not to permit their animals will forfeit ownership of those animals and have 60 days to either surrender the

animals or provide a written disposition statement indicating how and where the animals will be dispersed.

- 5) Applicants and permittees agree that the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission has the right to inspect facilities housing regulated large constrictors.
- 6) Applicants/permittees agree to the following minimum husbandry and safety standards.
 - a) Each enclosure shall be provided with an environment or devices that allow for temperature regulation necessary to insure the well-being of the species. The environment or devices shall be non-injurious to the reptile. Each enclosure shall be provided with a non-injurious and non-toxic substrate. Such substrate shall be disposed of or sanitized at intervals sufficient to insure the health of the animal(s). Clean water and food adequate to maintain good health shall be provided. Protection shall be provided at all times from extremes in temperature that could cause stress to the animal. Clean water and food adequate to maintain good health shall be provided.
 - b) Enclosure sizes for large constrictors shall be based upon the length of the longest specimen in the enclosure. For up to two specimens, the enclosure shall have, at least, a perimeter equal to the length of the longest specimen, and the width of the enclosure shall not be less than 20 percent of the length of the longest specimen. The width of the enclosure shall not be required to exceed 3 feet. Each additional specimen will require an increase of the perimeter by 10 percent. Sufficient space and appropriate cage furnishings should be provided to allow the animals to express behaviors natural to their species, which may include, but are not limited to, burrowing, climbing, coiling, perching and basking.
 - c) All enclosures must be securely locked and constructed in a manner that prevents escape and unauthorized access. Multiple smaller enclosures may be secured within a larger locked enclosure.
- 7) Applicants/permittees agree never to release their animals into the wild and understand that doing so could lead to permanent revocation of their large constrictor permit.
- 8) Not following any of these permit requirements can lead to revocation or non-renewal of the large constrictor permit and confiscation of the animal(s).

Crocodilians

NCPARC recommends that all crocodilians be regulated by requiring a renewable annual license in order to possess them. This includes all species belonging to the order Crocodylia except the American Alligator which is already regulated by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. We further recommend the following license requirements.

- 1) The applicant must be 18 years old or older and provide proof of age in the form of a copy of the applicant's driver's license or other valid photo id.
- 2) The cost of this license would be \$100.00 renewable each year.

- 3) This license is a species specific license, not a license to possess all crocodilians. When applying for a license to possess crocodilians the applicant must list the species he/she is requesting a license for.
- 4) In order to renew a crocodilian license the applicant must submit an annual report to the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission including: what species they are requesting the renewal for; the number of animals of each species in possession; and if breeding, the number of offspring produced and the disposition of those offspring.
- 5) Licensees may not sell, trade, or give away crocodilians, or their offspring, to unlicensed individuals within the State of North Carolina. Licensees are responsible for obtaining and retaining a copy of the buyers permit before selling, trading or giving away any crocodilian.
- 6) Grandfathering: Crocodilian owners will have one year from the date the license system goes into affect to apply for a Crocodilian license for animals already in their possession. Individuals opting not to license their animals will forfeit ownership of those animals and have 60 days to either surrender the animals or provide a written disposition statement indicating how and where the animals will be dispersed.
- 7) The applicant's facilities will be inspected by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission prior to the issuance of a Crocodilian License. After the initial inspection, re-inspection would take place at the discretion of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.
- 8) During the inspection process the following husbandry standards are required of the applicant in order to pass inspection. Note that these are the same North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission standards already in place for American alligators.
 - a) Enclosure: The enclosure shall be surrounded by a fence of sufficient strength to contain the animals and that shall prevent contact between the observer and the crocodilian. The enclosure shall contain a pool of water large enough for the animal to completely submerge itself. If more than one animal is kept, the pool must be large enough for all animals to be able to submerge themselves at the same time. A land area with both horizontal dimensions at least as long as the animal shall also be provided. In case of more than one animal, the land area shall have both horizontal dimensions at least as long as the longest animals to occupy the land area at the same time without overlap.
 - b) Sanitation and Care: The water area shall be kept clean and food adequate to maintain good health provided. Protection shall be provided at all times from extremes in temperature that could cause stress to the animal.
 - c) Safety Equipment: the following pieces of equipment are required to pass inspection: two long-handled brooms, a snout noose, rope, and a carrying device.
- 9) Applicants/licensees agree never to release their animals into the wild and understand that doing so could lead to permanent revocation of their crocodilian license.
- 10) Not following any of these license requirements can lead to revocation or non-renewal of the crocodilian license.

Venomous Reptiles

NCPARC recommends that all venomous reptiles be regulated by requiring a renewable annual license in order to possess them. We recommend a three tiered license system and the species within each tier are defined below. We further recommend the following license requirements.

Class A (Advanced Level)

True Sea Snakes

Sea Kraits

Australian Elapid Snakes

Other Elapids: Cobras; Mambas; Kraits

Rear-Fanged and Other Venomous Snakes: Boomslangs; African Twig Snakes; Stiletto Snakes

Class B (Intermediate Level)

All Other Elapids not included in Class A: Coral Snakes (except the Eastern Coral Snake which is protected in NC); African Garter Snakes

All other Vipers and Pit Vipers not included in Class C (except the Timber and Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake which are protected in NC)

Rear-fanged Snakes: Asian Garter Snakes

Class C (Entry Level)

Venomous Lizards

Vipers and Pit Vipers: Copperhead and Cottonmouth; Pigmy and Massasauga Rattlesnakes (except Carolina Pigmy Rattlesnake which is protected in NC); Tropical Tree Vipers

Rear-fanged Snakes: Cat Snakes (Boiga)

Note: Venomoid snakes are not excluded from the licensing requirements and will be treated as venomous. NCPARC and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission discourage the practice of removing venom glands as it is inhumane and does not guarantee safety.

Requirements to apply for a Venomous Reptile License

- 1) The applicant must be 18 years old or older and provide proof of age in the form of a copy of the applicant's driver's license or other valid photo id.
- 2) The cost of this license would be \$100.00 renewable each year.
- 3) A letter of proof from the institution that will provide the source of antivenom, for species that are non-native to the United States, is required in order to apply for a Venomous Reptile License.
- 4) At the onset of the licensing requirements individuals already working with venomous reptiles will need to be grandfathered into the Class of license appropriate to the animals they are working with. After the grandfathering process is complete all subsequent applicants will be required to begin with a Class C License. An applicant may apply for a Class B License after successfully maintaining a Class C License for a minimum of one year. Likewise an applicant may apply for a Class A License after successfully maintaining a Class B License for a minimum of one year.
- 5) Grandfathering: Venomous reptile owners will have one year from the date the license system goes into affect to apply for the Class license appropriate to the animals in their possession. Individuals opting not to license their animals will forfeit ownership of those animals and have 60 days to either surrender the animals or provide a written disposition statement indicating how and where the animals will be dispersed.
- 6) An applicant moving to North Carolina from another state may avoid beginning at a Class C License if they present either a valid venomous license from another state; or provide proof of their experience by submitting two letters of reference. These letters must contain the contact information for the references.

Once the application for a Venomous Reptile License is approved the following set of requirements will need to be met in order to for a Venomous Reptile License to be issued.

- 1) The applicant's facilities will be inspected by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission prior to the issuance of a Venomous Reptile License. After the initial inspection, re-inspection would take place when an applicant moves to a higher license class or at the discretion of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. (NCPARC is willing to aid in the inspection process and will provide the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission with an identification guide).
- 2) During the inspection process the following are required of the applicant in order to pass inspection.
 - a) A list of the species kept, a copy of the letter of antivenom proof (not required for venomous lizards-no antivenom available), the nearest and/or preferred hospital information, a bite protocol checklist and, once granted, a copy of the Venomous Reptile License must be posted in plain sight (on the door, in the room, or near the cage) where the animals kept.
 - b) Cages containing venomous reptiles must be labeled "Venomous". In addition, each cage containing venomous species must have a label containing the

- following information: common name; scientific name; appropriate antivenom; and number of individuals in the cage.
- c) The following pieces of equipment are required: at least two hooks of an appropriate size; at least one pair of snake tongs; a safety bin or transfer cage; clear tubes of an appropriate size; and, if spitting cobras are kept, face shields. For venomous lizards a pair of needle nose pliers or similar tool is required.
 - d) All cages must be securely locked. All cages using screen lids must use double mesh with at least a three-quarter inch gap between screens. It is not required, but strongly recommended that in addition to locked cages that venomous reptiles be kept in a sealed locked room.
 - e) The keeping of venomous reptiles in outdoor enclosures is limited to approved educational institutions. No outdoor enclosures for venomous reptiles will be approved for private keepers.
- 3) Applicants/licensees further agree to the following minimum husbandry standards.
 - a) Each enclosure shall be provided with an environment or devices that allow for temperature regulation necessary to insure the well-being of the species. The environment or devices shall be non-injurious to the reptile. Each enclosure shall be provided with a non-injurious and non-toxic substrate. Such substrate shall be disposed of or sanitized at intervals sufficient to insure the health of the animal(s).
 - b) Enclosure sizes for venomous snakes shall be based upon the length of the longest specimen in the enclosure. For up to two specimens, the enclosure shall have, at least, a perimeter equal to the length of the longest specimen, and the width of the enclosure shall not be less than 20 percent of the length of the longest specimen. The width of the enclosure shall not be required to exceed 3 feet. Each additional specimen will require an increase of the perimeter by 10 percent. Sufficient space and appropriate cage furnishings should be provided to allow the animals to express behaviors natural to their species, which may include, but are not limited to, burrowing, climbing, coiling, perching and basking.
 - c) Enclosure sizes for venomous lizards should conform to the following standards: for one lizard the minimum enclosure size shall be 30 inches by 12 inches, by 12 inches high. For each additional lizard the size shall be increased by three inches in both length and width.
 - 4) Applicants/licensees agree never to release their animals into the wild and understand that doing so could lead to permanent revocation of their venomous reptile license.
 - 5) In order to renew a venomous reptile license the applicant must submit an annual report to the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission including: what species they are maintaining; the number of animals of each species in possession; and if breeding, the number of offspring produced and the disposition of those offspring including whether ownership of the offspring has been transferred.
 - 6) Licensees may not sell, trade, or give away venomous reptiles, or their offspring, to non-licensed individuals within the State of North Carolina. Licensees are responsible for obtaining and retaining a copy of the buyer's license before selling, trading or giving away any venomous reptile.

Permit/License Denial and Revocation

Large constrictor permits and licenses for both crocodilians and venomous reptiles may be denied or revoked by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. The reasons for both denial and revocation include, but are not limited to, those outlined below.

- 1) A wildlife violation may be cause for denial of a permit or license.
- 2) If an applicant has been convicted of misdemeanor, or felony, animal cruelty a permit or license may be denied.
- 3) If the applicant hasn't met the terms and/or conditions of the permit or license this may be cause for denial.
- 4) Public endangerment could be cause for revocation of a permit or license.
- 5) Not adhering to the permit or license requirements may be cause for revocation. This includes keeping venomous reptiles outside the Class licensed for.
- 6) Any use of venomous reptiles in an illegal act could be cause for license revocation.