

Baltimore City Health Department
Responses to Comments on Proposed Exotic Pet Regulations

The Baltimore City Health Department accepted comments on the Proposed Regulations during the comment period from February 2, 2007 through March 2, 2007. Specific responses were received for the following exotic pets:

- Venomous spiders, scorpions and centipedes
- Reptiles, to include Green iguanas (*Iguana iguana*) less than 30 inches long or over 5 feet and Snakes over 5 feet long
- Pigeons

Proposed regulations of exotic pets that did not receive public comment will be final as proposed.

The following is the Baltimore City Health Department's (Department) comments based on the responses received:

1. Venomous spiders, scorpions and centipedes

The Department proposed listing all venomous spiders, scorpions and centipedes as prohibited.

Generally, responses focused on the issue of venomous and its very broad meaning that, as put forth by respondents, does not equate to deadly or serious injury and thus no public health basis for banning.

At this time the Department will list specifically those arachnids and centipedes deemed prohibited under the regulation. As further research and information become available, the following list may be revised.

Prohibited arachnids (spiders and scorpions) and centipedes:

Scorpions

- Arizona Bark Scorpion
- In the Mediterranean and North Africa - *Buthus*, *Leiurus*, *Androctonus* and *Leiurus*
- In Western and Southern Africa – *Parabuthus*
- Across Southern Africa to Southeast Asia - *Buthotus* (also known as *Hottentotta*)
- In Asia - *Mesobuthus* and the *Buthotus* (also known as *Hottentotta*)
- South America - *Tityus*

Spiders

- Black Widow
- Brown Recluse

- Mouse Spider
- Hobo Spider

Persons shall be responsible for possession of the above, whether or not they have knowledge of the species they possess.

2. Snakes

The proposed regulation would ban snakes and other reptiles longer than 5 feet.

Many comments were received in opposition to the reptile prohibitions. It is important to note that the ban on possessing snakes and other reptiles longer than 5 feet was passed and incorporated into the Health Code by City Council legislation in 1974. The Department does not have discretion to change this provision.

3. Pigeons

Comments were submitted on the regulations proposal to limit the number of pigeon ownership to 50. After reviewing the responses, the Department realizes that in order to breed a successful racing pigeon team, one must own more than 50. In an article published in the Baltimore Sun during the comment period, Deone Roberts, sports development manager of the American Racing Pigeon Union stated that “To have an appropriate race team, you need to have 100 birds.” (*Baltimore Sun*, 17 February 2007).

The Department agrees to increase the maximum number of pigeon ownership to 125.

Comments were submitted regarding the exercise limit of twice a day. After reviewing the responses, the Department is aware that young pigeons need more exercise than twice a day. The Department agrees to increase the maximum to 3 times a day under supervision.

Comments also revealed an unclear statement of the fee. The \$80 permit fee is for a one-time fee regardless of the number of pigeons owned. **The permit fee will not be assessed per pigeon.** The fee is one-time (not annual) fee to register the property for that particular pigeon coop.

It should be noted that the state of Maryland requires registration of pigeons under the Maryland Domestic Poultry and Exotic Bird Registration. See Maryland’s information at: http://www.mda.state.md.us/animal_health/poultryreg/index.php or contact their office at 410-742-6023.

4. Iguanas

The regulations propose the prohibition of keeping Green iguanas that are less than 30 inches or over 5 feet long.

Some comments were received in support of the minimum length requirement with statements that included "...I hope that this will encourage people to adopt older iguanas as opposed to purchasing hatchlings without full knowledge of the lengths that adults can attain." Also, similar response stated "Such a slot limit would however cut down on impulse purchases by the unwary that have not preciously researched their desired animal and as such do not realize just how potentially large their newly acquired reptile will get."

One comment opposed to this provision stated that some people with skills in handling iguanas can do so safely.

The Department will proceed with the promulgation of minimum length regulations for iguanas. It is important to note that those wishing to seek permit approval under 2 (d) of the Regulation for *Wild and Exotic Animals: Prohibited* may still do so.

Many responses were opposed to the maximum length requirement. The ban on possessing reptiles longer than 5 feet was passed and incorporated into the Health Code by City Council legislation in 1974. The Department does not have discretion to change this provision.

Effective Date:

The effective date for the exotic pet regulations will be sixty (60) days from the date the regulations are filed.