

AR2010: The Problem with “Pet” Primates in the U.S.



The scope of the problem, the inherent risks, and possible solutions

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Summary Of U.S. State Laws Regarding Private Sector Possession of Nonhuman Primates

- Some states have no bans on possession of primates as pets at all (Source: Born Free)
- Some states ban private sector possession
- Some states require a permit
- Some states have partial bans (banning certain species)
- Some states have partial bans (certain species); permits required for other species
- Aside from state laws, many municipalities, cities, and/or counties across the United States prohibit private possession of nonhuman primates.

Nonhuman primates pose safety and health risks to their possessors and any person coming into contact with them.



- Nonhuman primates are notorious for harboring deadly and contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis, and simian herpes B.
- Hazards are far greater for the typical person, who is most likely unfamiliar with the pathogenesis of disease.
- Most private sector primate owners lack the knowledge, devotion, and ambition necessary to prevent disease transmission from their “pet.”

Children are especially vulnerable to being attacked since monkeys and apes are naturally inclined to establish dominance hierarchies.



- This nine-year-old Montgomery County, Texas, boy was playing in his yard when he was suddenly attacked by a neighbor's "pet" macaque monkey.
- Of the attack, the boy says, "The monkey started jumping. He got this arm, then he jumped to this arm and started yanking, and going back and forth to a leg and both my arms, like, taking turns on all of them."

Inhumane and Unnatural Treatment



The life for so-called “pet” monkeys and apes is far removed from what they would experience in their natural habitat.

Robbed from their natural mothers at birth and denied the opportunity to live their lives in accordance with their instincts and with others of their species, “pet” monkeys typically have a dismal and stifling captive existence.

Primates in the Private Sector

Photo Gallery



A quick search on the Internet alone reveals 48 Web sites that specialize in selling baby monkeys and apes.

Primates in the Private Sector

Photo Gallery



This little capuchin is still swollen and in pain from having his teeth extracted.

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This irresponsible behavior endangers the life of the toddler and puts the child and monkey at risk of disease transmission.

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This infant chimpanzee should be in the arms of her mother.

Primates in the Private Sector

Photo Gallery



This adult spider monkey is housed in a parrot cage when she is not brought out to be dressed and harnessed.

Primates in the Private Sector

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This capuchin monkey is dressed in uncomfortable, confining clothing for the mere amusement of the owners.

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These children and nonhuman primates are at risk of disease transmission. Primate owners often assemble for "primate picnics."

Policies and Position Statements

- Importation of nonhuman primates as “pets” is prohibited by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control
- The World Organization for Animal Health, the American Zoological Association, the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians, and the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists have position statements opposing private sector possession of nonhuman primates.
- However, these policies are not laws and do not limit domestic trade of nonhuman primates as “pets,” which is rampant and is heavily promoted on the Internet.

The Captive Primate Safety Act

- The Captive Primate Safety Act (H.R. 80, S 462) would ban interstate and foreign commerce in primates.
- It has passed the House but awaits Senate action.
- The pet trade lobby is aggressively fighting this legislation.
- Primate possession laws and regulations often exclude "service monkeys."
- More information and photos are available at www.petmonkeyinfo.org

Contact the International Primate Protection League



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