

POINTS TO PAWNDER SERIES

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Lions And Tigers And Bears...You Want One As A Pet? Oh My!!

Is the lure of owning an exotic pet pulling at you? Do you think that owning a tiger, monkey, tortoise or lemur would be fun? Millions of exotic animals are kept in private homes, roadside zoos and pet stores. But there is ample evidence to suggest that exotic pets **DO NOT** belong in our living rooms. They're costly, difficult to responsibly safely care for, and if you change your mind, there are few sanctuaries that are able to take them in. Moreover, arguably, it is not humane or fair to keep an exotic animal confined in your home.

Facts About Exotics As Pets

Thinking About Owning An Exotic Pet? Read Some Of These Facts First.



- To be "exotic" is to be a wild animal. Wild animals are not designed by nature to live in captivity.
- Exotics purchased as babies are often abandoned as they grow older because the owner cannot control the large adult animal. It is simply not fair to purchase an exotic pet when the statistics suggest you will likely be forced to give up that pet in the future.
- Exotic pets can carry bacteria, such as salmonella, which can be transmitted to humans. The Herpes B virus is carried by as many as 90% of macaque monkeys. Although this virus may be harmless to monkeys, this disease is often fatal to humans.
- Many cities and states have laws that prohibit private citizens from owning exotic pets.
- Exotics animals can and sometimes do escape from their cages and attack both humans and other animals – often, with fatal consequences.
- Owning an exotic pet is exponentially more costly than owning a dog or cat.
- Most exotic animal sanctuaries are filled to capacity, and are therefore unable to assist citizens who have purchased exotic pets and then decided they cannot safely or reasonably keep them.

Examples Of Animals That Are Considered Exotic. *This Is Not A Complete List.*

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| • Lions | • Lizards |
| • Leopards | • Turtles |
| • Cheetahs | • Tortoises |
| • Jaguars | • Lemurs |
| • Cougars | • Alligators |
| • Tigers | • Bears |
| • Bobcats | • Iguanas |
| • Snakes | • Monkeys |

How Big Can My Exotic Really Get And Aren't They Like Other Pets?

Example #1: Tigers

- A full grown tiger will weigh between 350 and 500 pounds. They may be small as cubs, but they will grow about 10 pounds a month.
- The lifespan of a tiger in captivity is 20 years of age.
- Tigers eat only meat, and a lot of it. On average, they can eat 1.5 to 2 tons of meat per year. Tigers eat red meat, such as whole beef and bison. The occasional hamburger will not fill the tiger up, nor is it what the tiger needs.
- Tigers are wild animals, and they can kill. In 2005, at least 19 attacks on humans were reported from private owners. Unlike domestic cats, tigers are unpredictable, and will often become very aggressive over food or at play.
- It is unlikely that anyone else will be able to responsibly care for your tiger. They may learn to trust you, but not just anyone. What will happen if you take a vacation?
- There are few veterinarians who treat tigers. So who will give medical attention to your tiger? Who is qualified? Most veterinarians lack the experience and resources needed for this.
- In 2003, a bill was passed making it illegal to sell and own big cats as pets. Thus, if you do not have proper licensing or paperwork, there will be stiff fines, and authorities can confiscate your cat.

Example #2: Monkeys

- A monkey may seem to be the most "human-like animal," but socially, they are less human-like than you might expect. Monkeys are dirty, will bite, scratch, and destroy belongings.
- It is unlikely that anyone else will be able to responsibly care for your monkey. This is because monkeys will usually only grow to trust one person. So like owning a tiger, say goodbye to vacations.
- Depending on the type of monkey, some can live up to 35 years.
- Monkeys can throw temper tantrums, often resulting in severe injuries to their owners.
- Many serious and even deadly diseases can be passed from monkeys to people.
- There are few veterinarians who treat monkeys. So who will give medical attention to your monkey? Who is qualified? Most veterinarians lack the experience and resources needed for this.
- Imitating a monkey's natural habitat is close to impossible. Monkeys like trees, water, and vines to keep them busy. Is it fair to confine a monkey in your home, given this fact?

Suggested Reading

- **Animal Protection Institute. Exotic "Pet" Incidents**
<http://www.api4animals.org/facts.php?p=443&more=1>

Important Note: Indiana-PAW's POINTS TO PAWNDER SERIES is intended to provide quick tips to help citizens address common pet health and behavior questions. It is not intended to replace consultation with one's veterinarian and/or a trained behavior specialist.