



State of Rhode Island

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News Release

RI Department of Environmental Management
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For Release: February 23, 2010

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DEM TO HOLD TWO PUBLIC HEARINGS THURSDAY, MARCH 4 REGARDING ANIMAL HEALTH ISSUES

Proposed New Rabies Control Rules and Regulations and Proposed Amendments Governing Importation and Possession of Wild Animals Will be Heard

PROVIDENCE - The Department of Environmental Management announces that it will hold public hearings on Thursday, March 4 on proposed adoption of new rabies control rules and regulations and proposed amendments to rules and regulations governing the importation and possession of wild animals. Both hearings are scheduled for 9 a.m. in Room 300 at DEM Headquarters, 235 Promenade Street in Providence.

The [proposed new rabies control rules and regulations](#) replace two existing sets of regulations governing the control and suppression of rabies. Most significantly, the proposed new regulations require dogs and cats to be vaccinated no more frequently than the stated duration of immunity on the vaccine product label. The definition of a currently vaccinated animal will change to allow for the vaccine's duration of immunity for as long as the product manufacturer claims it has been proven to be effective for.

The proposed new rules and regulations also remove the exemption from being currently vaccinated against rabies for dogs and cats that are used for show or exhibit purposes within the state, and for animals being imported into Rhode Island for breeding purposes. Removal of this exemption will better ensure public health and establish consistency with the state's domestic animal importation regulations which require all dogs and cats to be currently vaccinated prior to importation for any purpose.

Lastly, the proposed new rules and regulations define the components of a valid rabies certificate. This definition will require vaccine certificates issued for large animals to be consistent with the information recorded on certificates issued for small animals.

Amended Regulations Regarding Exotic Wild Animals Would Prohibit Ownership of Non-Native or Exotic Amphibians without a Permit

DEM is also proposing [amended regulations regarding the importation and possession of](#)

[exotic wild animals](#). These amendments clarify which animals may be owned without a permit, and animals for which a permit is required. Most significantly, these regulations allow for the establishment of three categories of animals - domestic animals, exempt exotic animals, and exotic animals. Animals classified as domestic or exempt exotic do not require a possession permit, while animals classified as exotic require a possession permit for ownership. All animals that do not appear on either the list of domestic animals or the list of exempt exotic animals require a possession permit by default. These regulations also provide some realignment of species between various lists. The categorization of various animal species has been done to encompass animals that are considered a nuisance or invasive species, or a public or animal health threat.

The amended regulations categorize all non-native or exotic amphibians as nuisance/invasive species, and therefore ownership of these animals would be prohibited in the state without a permit. According to biologists in DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife, amphibians common in pet store trade such as non-native bullfrogs have the potential to decimate native amphibians due to their invasive tendencies and that they often carry diseases. Under the amended regulations, possession of non-native or exotic amphibians would be prohibited without a permit as these animals present a danger to the ecosystem. Also under the amended regulations, a permit would now be required for the possession of alligators; existing regulations do not require such a permit. The amended regulations also require permit applicants to submit a letter from DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife stating that the animal for which the permit is sought does not represent a threat to native species and is not considered endangered or restricted on the federal level.

Both sets of proposed regulations are available on [DEM's website, www.dem.ri.gov](http://www.dem.ri.gov), by clicking on "[Regulations/Proposed Regulations](#)" on the left side of the [homepage](#). They are also available by calling DEM's Division of Agriculture at 222-2781 during normal business hours. Written comments can be submitted until 12:00 p.m. on March 16 to DEM's Division of Agriculture, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, RI 02908.