



# Opposing view: Let people own exotic animals

By Zuzana Kukol

Updated 10/20/2011 8:10 PM

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This week's tragedy in Zanesville, Ohio, brought back the question of whether private ownership of wild and exotic animals should be legal.



By Tony Dejak, AP

Burial begins at the Muskingum County Animal Farm on Wednesday in Zanesville, Ohio.

## OUR VIEW: Wild animals aren't pets

The simple answer is yes. Responsible private ownership of exotic animals should be legal if animal welfare is taken care of. Terry Thompson didn't represent the typical responsible owner. He had a criminal record and animal abuse charges. What Thompson did was selfish and insane; we cannot regulate insanity.

People keep exotic animals for commercial reasons and as pets. Most exotic animals — such as big cats, bears or apes — are in commercial, federally inspected facilities. These animals are born in captivity, and not "stolen" from the wild. Captive breeding eliminates the pressure on wild populations, and also serves as a backup in case the animals go extinct.

Dangers from exotic animals are low. On average in the United States, only 3.25 people per year are killed by captive big cats, snakes, elephants and bears. Most of these fatalities are owners, family members, friends and trainers voluntarily on the property where the animals were kept. Meanwhile, traffic accidents kill about 125 people per day.

If we have the freedom to choose what car to buy, where to live, or what domestic animal to have, why shouldn't we have the same freedom to choose what species of wild or exotic animal to own and to love?

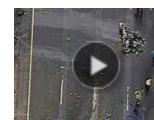
Would the Ohio situation be any different if the animals were owned by a government and their caretaker released them? Is this really about private ownership, or is it about certain people's personal issues with exotics in captivity?

If society overreacts and bans exotics because of actions of a few deranged individuals, then we need to ban kids,

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as that is the only way to totally stop child abuse, and we need to ban humans, because that is the only way to stop murder. Silly, isn't it?

*Zuzana Kukol is president and co-founder of Responsible Exotic Animal Ownership (REXANO).*

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[janssnakes](#)

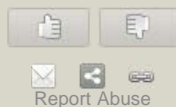
12:55 AM on October 21, 2011

Score: 32

Some of you are really missing the point:( There are many people who bring children into this world and have no idea how to take care of them. Some people couldn't take care of a pet rock they are that dense:( But there are some people who know how to take care of big cats or snakes or whatever and they should be allowed to have them. There are already regulations in place for these people. This guy that let his animals out had totally lost it. No one in his right mind would do that to his animals that he loved and took care of even when he was in prison. You can't make everyone pay for the mistakes of a few.

Zoos are regulated by the Fed government and states and how many people have been killed by escaped animals? So do we close down all the zoos and kill all the animals because a stupid kid harassed a tiger that made it mad enough to climb a moat and kill the idiot? Or because someone didn't follow the rules for feeding and cleaning a pen and got killed? Your comments sadden me because YOU just can't connect the dots. There isn't much wild left anymore. Perhaps humans should restrict their populations and put regulations into place to stop some from breeding.

[2 replies](#)





AmyR2

12:47 AM on October 21, 2011

Score: 30

I think some are taking an extraordinary incident and making it their only view. Animal rights groups are using it as an example - even though it's not comparable to any past incidents or able to be compared to responsible exotic owners. I don't own any big cats and still see this as a tragic situation, brought on by an individual, with no judgment of others based on this one.

The woman in Connecticut wasn't a stranger to the chimp, claimed to fear him before the incident. So why would she go there under the circumstances? Personal responsibility is something to consider in all this, as Brent Kandra was also an adult, had been around the animals as a volunteer for quite some time, even as a juvenile according to the media. Where was the mother's outrage then?

Life is an inherent risk and statistics don't show an overwhelming death or harm to the public. AZA zoos have a record of deaths and injury also, but I don't see many complaining about these. Why would that be?



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janssnakes

11:12 PM on October 20, 2011

Score: 23

The author makes a very good point. Safety laws should be based on actual risk rather than the public's and lawmaker's hysterical reaction to the headline of the day. I'd venture to guess that one's risk of being killed or injured in an automobile accident are much higher than being killed or injured by an exotic animal even if you live next to a responsible exotic animal owner. Let's keep risk in perspective when we legislate.

1 reply



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DellroyGM

12:37 PM on October 21, 2011

Score: 17

Even if Ohio had the most stringent exotic animal laws in the world, even if there were inspections and mountains of paperwork involved in having a private zoo, please explain how any of that would prevent somebody from going loopy and turning the animals loose? This incident was an isolated event, with one casualty - the guy who went bonkers.

1 reply



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fdavidson

11:54 AM on October 21, 2011

Score: 15

The problem is also that there are more captive exotic animals that do not have the ability to survive on their own in the wild than there are zoos to take care for them. Without private caretakers, these animals would have to be put down. There are many private individuals caring for exotic animals and you never hear about them because they do it by the book and know what they are doing. The actions of one misguided individual should not classify the whole group.

2 replies



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berlin70

8:19 AM on October 21, 2011

Score: 15

I think if someone is going to own these type of animals they need to be certified to prove they have the knowledge and means to take care of and deal with these animals. These animals also need the area to roam not just sit in a cage and walk back and forth.

In the article it stated this is good for private ownership in case the breed



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goes extinct then that should be delt with by people who know what they are doing not just the average citizen.  
Traffic accident kill 125 per day and only 3.25 people per year well maybe we should outlaw motor vehicles than because more are killed there.  
Everything no matter what it is comes down to responsibility and knowing what you are doing.

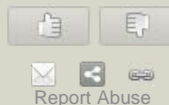


**Nachtzug**

11:29 AM on October 21, 2011

Score: 14

With freedom comes responsibility, and when the lives of people and animals are at stake, it is prudent to enforce a certain level of responsibility. We do this with automobile driving, in ways that vary from state-to-state, through licensing, proof of insurance requirements, vehicle inspections, and traffic citations. Guns are similarly regulated in many states. It is reasonable to expect private ownership of exotic animals to be regulated as well.



**Igor**

6:57 PM on October 21, 2011

Score: 11

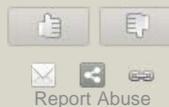
I would like to point out that the tragedy in Ohio did not happen because of the legality of private exotic animal ownership in that state. The tragedy in Ohio happened because the animals were RELEASED from their cages. The release of captive animals from cages is a form of "direct action" frequently practiced by radical animal right activists. As recently as 2-3 week ago, thousands of minks have been released by animal right activists from several fur farms across the U.S. and Europe. Just like in Ohio, the vast majority of released animals tragically died.

We should NOT ban the private ownership of exotic animals.

We need tougher laws against the unlawful RELEASE of captive animals.

We also need to revoke the tax-exempt status of nonprofit organizations supporting the actions of radical animal activists (such as HSUS).

[2 replies](#)

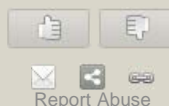


**Kat Wolfdancer**

2:21 PM on October 22, 2011

Score: 10

Martin Niemöller wrote: "First they came for the communists, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a communist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me." HSUS is the moving factor behind all this fear mongering. HSUS wants to end ALL human animal use. That means: no pets, no meat, no eggs, no dairy, no hunting, no nothing. No Zoos, no sanctuaries, no nothing. All animals would be "released" to "live as they will", or in the case of those animals whose habitat has been destroyed by human development, to go peacefully extinct. Those of you clamoring to ban all private ownership of exotics are calling to punish those people who have dedicated their lives to their "pet of choice", those who "do it right" don't make news, because GOOD news doesn't MAKE news. if the authorities whom y'all would trust to "govern us well" had not refused help a year ago, this would never have happened. I'd love to hear Sheriff Lutz' reasoning of why he refused the assistance of not one but TWO reputable federally licensed facilities and a bevy of private owner donations to remove these animals into better circumstances. Was it pride? Stubbornness? Regardless, this



tragedy and the responsibility for the deaths of those animals falls squarely on his shoulders. We have to remember that you cannot legislate common sense. Those of us who believe in the Constitution, in the Bill of Rights, in life liberty and happiness, we believe that as long as you care for the animals you have responsibly, no one should have the right to take that right from you. A ban would only punish those who "do it right". Enforce the laws we have on the books. Standardize the animal welfare laws. Resist the brainwashing and knee jerk reactions of HSUS and be a HUMAN with a BRAIN.

>^,^<

 2 replies

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