

# MEMORANDUM



**To:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners  
**From:** Curtis Brown, Director, Division of Law Enforcement  
**Date:** April 14, 2016  
**Subject:** Venomous Reptiles

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**Purpose:**

Staff is requesting direction from the Commission on potential changes to the venomous reptile regulations and approval to workshop proposals with stakeholders and the public.

**Summary:**

In response to two high profile incidents involving escaped non-native venomous reptiles, the Commission directed staff to evaluate existing regulations and develop a range of regulatory options for the Commission's consideration. Prior to receiving this direction, staff had already held a series of eight statewide meetings from December 2014 through March 2015 to meet with stakeholders and gather public input on all captive wildlife rules. A number of recommendations regarding venomous reptiles were submitted during those meetings. Staff also created and distributed a survey to help gauge stakeholder opinions on venomous reptile regulations regarding classifications, bio-security and training.

Based on reviews of existing regulations and recommendations received, staff have developed proposed changes to the existing rules that would modify training, caging and handling requirements to increase bio-security, thus minimizing the risk to licensees and the general public in regards to escapes and/or bites from venomous reptiles.

Staff also recommend separating venomous reptiles into two classifications: native and non-native, and establishing a technical assistance group (TAG) to assist staff on categories (or tiers) within the non-native classification ranging from continued possession to potential prohibitions of possession for some species.

In addition to utilizing the TAG for assistance, staff would also propose to work with industry experts to develop this tier system. Additional workshops with stakeholders, permit holders and the public is needed to refine staff's proposals and various options for regulations.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Approval to work with the TAG, industry experts, and others to refine proposed changes to existing rules and establish the classification system and return in June 2016 with a draft rule.

**Staff Contact and/or Presenter:** Brian Smith, Section Leader, DLE