

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Curtis Brown, Director, Division of Law Enforcement
Date: September 9, 2016
Subject: Draft Rule - Venomous Reptiles

Purpose:

Staff will present draft rule language to increase biosecurity of captive venomous reptiles and provide the Commission with a status update on potential additional rules being discussed with the Technical Assistance Group (TAG), which will address concerns for public safety and Florida's ecological well-being regarding venomous reptiles.

Summary:

At the April 2016 Commission meeting, the Commission directed staff to work with stakeholders to review venomous reptile rules and return with proposed rule changes to address increased biosecurity and a potential classification of venomous reptiles based upon risks posed by different species. Staff formed a TAG and met with them twice to hear their recommendations as staff developed draft rules for venomous reptiles. The TAG consisted of both industry experts and herpetological experts. Staff has also disseminated the proposed changes to other industry experts for input and taken their feedback under consideration. Additionally staff has encouraged public input through comment cards, email and direct contact. Staff will describe the proposed draft language.

The results of the TAG and stakeholder feedback have culminated in the development of draft rules that would address biosecurity, modify caging and handling requirements, increase accountability and responsibility. This will reduce the risk to licensees, the general public and ecological resources in regards to escapes and/or bites from venomous reptiles that are currently permitted for possession.

Staff has also developed a new definitions section under Chapter 68A-6 to provide more clarity and consistency with venomous reptile regulations.

Although the TAG and other stakeholders discussed and developed a draft classification system based on a number of risk factors, there remains strong concerns by stakeholders regarding the limitation of possession. Therefore, staff recommends continued work with the TAG and stakeholders.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval for advertising the creation of Section 68A-6.001, F.A.C.; and the definitions therein, and proposed amendments to Rule 68A-6.007, F.A.C. Publication of the draft rules would be as soon as possible with a final public hearing set for the November Commission meeting. Staff recommends continued work with stakeholders on a potential classification system that would possibly affect possession of venomous reptiles based on a number of risk factors.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Rob Beaton, Section Leader, Division of Law Enforcement