

Delaware Adopts New Rules Pertaining To Exotic Animals

Many small animal pets are exempt, but Delaware's new regulations affect many other nonnative reptiles or mammals kept as pets.

By The SmallAnimalChannel News Division

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The state of Delaware now has new regulations regarding selling and owning exotic animals.

The Delaware Department of Agriculture has adopted new regulations governing the possession and selling of exotic animals in the state.

The regulations, which became effective on January 11, 2010, establish a permit system for owning or selling of exotic animals (some exemptions are provided). They also provide enclosure and welfare requirements that permit holders must meet.

The regulations define "exotic animals" as a live wild mammal, hybrid of a wild mammal and a live reptile not native to or generally found in Delaware.

The following animals are exempt from permit requirements:

- Chinchillas
- Degus
- Ferrets
- Gerbils
- Guinea pigs
- Hamsters
- Hedgehogs
- Mice
- Norway rats
- Possoms
- Rabbits
- Sugar gliders
- Anoles
- Agamas
- Asian Water Dragons
- Basilisks
- Bearded dragons
- Chameleons
- Geckos
- Iguanas
- Skinks (except the five-lined skink)
- Swift lizards
- Tegus

When exotic animals are to be kept as pets, the owner must obtain an individual permit from the department of agriculture. A separate individual permit is required for each exotic animal. Individual permits must be renewed every three years, and the department may conduct a background check on the applicants.

Businesses seeking to sell exotic animals must obtain an exotic animal sales permit, renewable on an annual basis, from the department. Initial applications must be filed prior to any sale of any exotic animal by the business.

A sales permit holder must meet the following conditions when an exotic animal is sold:

The seller must require the purchaser has a valid exotic animal permit.

The seller must provide the purchaser with written information regarding the exotic's enclosure and welfare requirements.

The seller must verify at the time of sale that the purchaser's name and address on a valid ID card is the same as the exotic animal permit.



The seller must notify the purchaser of the possibility that there may be county, city, local laws, rules and regulations that may govern the possession of exotics in their area.

The seller must notify the department of the purchaser's name and address (and telephone and e-mail when available) and an accurate description of the exotic after the sale by the first of every month.

A copy of the purchaser's sale record must be maintained by the seller for three years after the sale of the exotic animal. Exotics animal sales permit holders must attest in writing that all exotic animals for sale are in good health at the time of sale.

Exotic animal permits are also required for zoos, exhibitors and those who provide short-term care and rehabilitation of exotics.

All permit holders are required to notify the department if any of the following occur:

Any change of name, permanent address or phone number (notification within 30 days)

Any change of ownership (immediate notification)

An exotic animal's birth or death (by the first of each month)

Escape of an exotic animal from its enclosure (immediate notification)

In terms of housing, sales permit holders are not permitted to breed carnivores, hybrids of wild mammals, omnivores or primates. Therefore, shared enclosures for these classes of exotics can only be used for sterile exotics. Certain herbivore and reptile classes may be bred and can share enclosures.

Zoo permit holders are allowed to breed all classes of exotics.

All other permit holders, including individual permits holders, are not permitted to breed exotic animals; and therefore, shared enclosures can only be used for sterile exotics.

Failure to obtain a permit may result in the seizure and disposal of the exotic animal. Violators could face a fine of up to \$500, according to the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council.

To read the new regulations in their entirety, visit the Delaware Department of Agriculture website.

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