



Keep the Ban on Selling Small Turtles To Protect Public Health, Animal Welfare

The Humane Society of the United States strongly supports the current prohibition on selling small turtles, and opposes legislation to allow sales of these animals in the United States.

Since 1975, federal health regulations have prohibited the sale of small turtles (with shells less than four inches long) in the United States. Previously, pet turtles were a major source of *Salmonella* infections, accounting for as many as 14 percent of U.S. Salmonella cases.

Small turtles continue to be exported to other countries. As the export business becomes less profitable, turtle farmers are seeking legislation to re-open the domestic market. The HSUS urges Congress to leave the current rule in place to protect public health, animal welfare, and the environment.

Public Health

- The Food and Drug Administration recently reaffirmed that the rule prohibiting the sale of small turtles is a necessary public health measure.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that the rule prevents 100,000 children from getting Salmonella infections each year. The CDC recommends that children under five, senior citizens, pregnant women, and others at the highest risk avoid all contact with turtles.
- There is no effective way to make turtles permanently salmonella free.
 - In 2004, a Wisconsin retailer claiming to be selling Salmonella-free turtles sent six turtles to be tested; all were carrying Salmonella.
 - Turtles who test negative for Salmonella may still be infected.
- Small turtles are especially dangerous because children may be tempted to touch them and put their hands -- or the turtles -- in their mouths.

Animal Welfare

- Countless turtles in the pet trade die due to rough handling during transport or inadequate care afterwards.
- If they survive, turtles can live for decades, outgrowing their tanks and welcome. One state rescue group gets a dozen calls a day to place these animals and will no longer respond to them.

Environment

- The trade in pet turtles results in depleted wild populations and damaged habitats.
- Turtles released when owners can no longer care for them endanger native species by carrying diseases and by out-competing native turtles for food and resources. The IUCN-World Conservation Union lists red-eared sliders among the world's 100 worst invasive alien species.

Pediatricians, Veterinarians and Others Support the Current Regulations

Organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians support the longstanding prohibition on selling small turtles in the U.S. and oppose any legislation to weaken or overturn this rule.