

# Fact Sheet

## Support The Captive Primate Safety Act S. 1498 / H.R. 2964

The Captive Primate Safety Act will protect public health and safety as well as animal welfare by prohibiting interstate commerce in monkeys, chimpanzees, and other primates as pets.

Primates can inflict serious injuries and spread life-threatening disease, and the average pet owner cannot provide proper care for them. Because of the health risks, importing nonhuman primates into the United States for the pet trade has been banned by federal regulation since 1975. Still, an estimated 15,000 primates are in private hands, and they are readily available for purchase on the Internet and from exotic animal dealers.

**Federal legislation is needed:** Most states regulate keeping primates as pets, and the trend is for states to prohibit the practice altogether. Because many of these animals move in interstate commerce, federal legislation is needed to complement state laws. The Captive Primate Safety Act passed the Senate by unanimous consent in 2006 but was not considered in the House of Representatives.

**The Captive Primate Safety Act:** The bill amends the Lacey Act by adding nonhuman primates to the list of animals who cannot be transported across state lines as pets. It does for primates what the Captive Wildlife Safety Act – which Congress passed unanimously in late 2003 – did for lions, tigers, and other big cats.

**No impact on zoos and research facilities:** The legislation has been narrowly targeted to the pet trade. It will have no impact on zoos, universities, or wildlife sanctuaries.

**Dangerous behavior:** While infant primates may seem cute and cooperative, they inevitably grow larger and more aggressive. They can become many times stronger than humans and extremely difficult to handle. Even smaller primates can inflict serious harm by biting and scratching. Removing their teeth, as many pet owners do, is cruel and no safeguard against injury. More than 100 people – including 29 children – have been injured by primates over the past ten years; many more incidents likely have occurred but gone unreported.

**Disease threat:** Nonhuman primates can spread diseases that pose serious health risks to humans, including Herpes B, tuberculosis, and monkey pox. For example, most macaque monkeys naturally carry the deadly Herpes B virus. Research published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concludes that the health risks makes macaques unsuitable as pets.

**Animal welfare concerns:** Nonhuman primates require a specialized diet, the companionship of other nonhuman primates, and housing in very large enclosures – needs the average pet owner cannot meet. A chimpanzee who becomes too difficult to handle at age eight might live another 50 years. There are few options for placing these animals. They may end up confined to small cages, sold to substandard roadside menageries, or back in the cycle of breeding and adding to the exotic animal trade.

**Support of zoos and other organizations:** The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), the Jane Goodall Institute, Friends of the Earth, Born Free USA, and many other organizations have joined The Humane Society of the United States in supporting the Captive Primate Safety Act. The AZA policy for member zoos states that “under no circumstances are primates to be disposed of to a private individual or to the pet trade.”



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