

October 25, 2006
Policy, Regulation, and Trade Committee Meeting
UNCG Eberhart Building Conference Room

Dave Davenport, Kendrick Weeks, Tanith Tyrr, Andrew Wyatt, Carl Person, Grover Barfield, Phil Bradley, David Cooper, Ann Somers, John Groves, Ted Williams, Daron Barnes

1:30pm

Dave- Let's get started. We finished Crocodylians last time and started our discussion of venomous. Our task at hand today is to fill in all the details of the venomous license. I guess we'll start where we left off and the three things I asked everyone to think about last time. We actually defined what venomous is and so we included some families and some genera in Colubridae: Viperidae, Elapidae, Atractaspidae, Hydrophiidae, and Helodermatidae. And under Colubridae we included the genera Dispholidus, Thelotornis, Thrasops, Philodryas, Rhabdophis, Psammophis, Macropisthodon, Phalotris, and Boiga. Basically, we defined venomous as the first two paragraphs (Dr. Fry's) including Thelotornis because that was left off and does have known fatalities. We also were discussing the three classes of licenses. We also need to nail down the antivenom issue. The licensees need to provide a statement of access to antivenom. And, finally we need to discuss apprenticeship of licensees.

Tanith- Just a few thoughts on the classes of licenses; we can discuss difficulty of handling forever, but my recommendation is to include species with the least medical consequences in the first level; Boiga. Also, include snakes which have easily accessible antivenom such as native vipers. I think it should also be limited. We don't have to put a lot of snakes in the lowest class. We could just say, "We want to have you keep snakes in this class for a year to demonstrate your ability and could be in addition to or substitution for, as Carl mentioned in the last meeting, some sort of formal apprenticeship. Just a documented year of working with these snakes should suffice. Now, one of my recommendations... the Asian rat snake, which is *Elaphe* and they turned our US species into *Pantheropsis*, they aren't venomous but make excellent trainer snakes; they are big and they are naughty.

Dave- Before we dive into each of these things, there is one more step we have to take and that is we need to have hear from Daron. What is it going to take to fund this thing? What recourses do we have? It doesn't matter what we come up with, it is going to be an uphill battle because some do not want to regulate exotics. If we can get some that at least think our recommendations can work.

Ann- What is the source of this document?

Dave- Dr. Bryan Fry.

Ann- I think it should be cited;

John- There is a couple of genera in here...Conophis?

Dave- Well, we can dump a few; the easier we make it, the better...here is the original list: Viperidae (vipers), Elapidae (cobras, mambas, etc.), Atractaspidae (side-fanged vipers), Hydrophiidae (sea-snakes), and Helodermatidae (beaded lizards). And under Colubridae we included the genera Dispholidus (boomslang/common African tree snake), Thelotornis (African bird/vine/twig snake), Rhabdophis (SE Asian keel-backs), and Boiga (Austral-Asian cat snakes).

John- And, it is going to be very difficult to distinguish some of the colubrids.

Ted- Could we also put these in layman's terms because even though I have been working with snakes for 25 years, I don't know what you're talking about.

Group- general agreement

Ann- And the source and who compiled it.

Sources of Information in this document:
Women and Children's Hospital Adelaide
<http://www.toxinology.com>
Accessed by Kendrick Weeks

Dave- We have to put as close to common names because they have many. As close as possible.

Tanith- This handout is my notes based upon what Dr. Fry was telling me.

John- I think we should base it on the original list.

Dave- Well, there was a question about Thrasops (African black tree snakes) and Philodryas (South American green racers) last time.

John- I looked and couldn't find anything

Dave- And according to this, there has been a documented fatality but I...I am fine with leaving them out. We know that boomslangs (Dispholidus) and bird/vine/twig snakes (Thelotornis) are problematic.

John- And Rhabdophis (SE Asian keel-backs) is tuff.

Tanith- I don't know what happened with the Thrasops (African black tree snakes) and Philodryas (South American green racer) envenomations...

Phil- There was a documented fatality for Philodryas (South American green racer), the rest were different.

Dave- OK. How about we stick with the following:

Viperidae (pit vipers), Elapidae (cobras, mambas, etc.), Atractaspidae (side-fanged vipers), Hydrophiidae (sea-snakes), and Helodermatidae (beaded lizards). And under Colubridae we included the genera Dispholidus (boomslang/common African tree snake), Thelotornis (African bird/vine/twig snake), Rhabdophis (SE Asian keel-backs), and Boiga (Austral-Asian cat snakes).

Tanith- We do run the risk of a very rare risk of something happening to a small child when we leave them out.

Discussion about rare reactions

Dave- Well, maybe someone should make a motion.

Tanith- I move to include the families and general of Colubridae (listed above) to define “venomous”

John- I second that

Dave- All in favor? All opposed? The Aye-aye’s have it. Ok, we need to have the discussion about license levels or apprenticeships.

Tanith- Carl brought up the issue that not everyone can serve a formal apprenticeship and maybe not everyone has to. What fee would be required to cover the initial inspection to make sure the animals are in good health and have the proper facilities?

Daron- When you talk about inspections are you talking one time or what? If you have an apprenticeship then you can have real time monitoring and guidance. We just do an initial inspection of facilities in falconry and don’t until there is a problem or someone moves.

Tanith- Well, I don’t think there is a need for continual inspection...

Daron- You have to accept the pros and cons; I think there should probably be an inspection each time they are adding significantly to what they are doing.

Tanith- Why?

Daron- Well, because if you start at a level one caging requirements and you move up to a level three caging requirement, then you need to inspect the facilities again.

Tanith- I don't agree with that. A secure locking cage for a Boiga (Austral-Asian cat snake) is the same as for a black mamba (*Dendroaspis polylepis*).

Daron- I was just saying that if it is number, so if you are over...say 50 snakes, then you might want another.

Dave- Well, yes if you have a great amount of snakes, you would want to have a room that is secure.

Tanith- In Florida, you have to have a secure locking room no matter if you have one or 50 venomous snakes.

Ted- Can we police ourselves? Will license holders be notified of other license holders?

Dave- I think we have to have NCPARC agree to do inspections. I don't know if we want to wrap the apprenticeship idea with the inspections or not. I see a need for inspection after application for the license and they would be open to inspection at any time, but I don't see the need for annual inspections; unless something happens...

Daron- That is similar to the falconry model. They are pretty much self-regulating. As you said, we can inspect at any time, but usually don't unless someone reports them or something happens. We inspect when they add a facility or move.

Dave- Does the falconry guild do the inspection?

Daron- No. The housing facility is inspected and then we are done. The guild self regulates.

Dave- OK. This brings up apprenticeship and should not necessarily be connected to inspections. The apprenticeship with the falconry guild works well because nothing is going to kill you. The liability associated with training is an issue. I don't know the answer but maybe Kendrick can consult with the state lawyers about this. If the answer to this is that there is a lawsuit, then no one in this room...

Tanith- I have heard of two such instances, one in FL and one in TX and I don't think anything happened because they decided not to pursue it.

Ted- Well, if you have someone get tagged in your facility, I am sure there is going to be a lawsuit.

Kendrick- Unless there is a waiver...

Dave- Well, even a waiver doesn't mean anything...

Ted- All it has to say is you understand the risks and don't hold me liable, sign it, notarize it, and it is a legal document...

Dave- It is, but it is not going to prevent anyone from suing...

Carl- Not one bit. Every time you go to the hospital, you sign a waiver. If something happens, you turn around and sue them. So, the thing is no one is coming to my facility, no way. But, I am willing to visit someone else's facility and do an inspection...

Dave- We have been haggling about apprenticeship for so long, maybe we can just be willing help with inspections and have three levels.

Carl- I think you had in your mind three levels to avoid apprenticeships. You don't need an apprentice to handle a copperhead or a Gabon viper as far as I am concerned.

Dave- I mean I like the apprenticeship idea, but the practicality of it is that I am not sure it would work.

Tanith- You need to document one year and 1000 hours in any facility and that would include zoo keeper, volunteer positions...

Dave- I used to do venomous training at the museum and it was only for state employees. We did not give it for the general public.

Ted- Who do you determine is at what level. Because there are many people in the private sector that know more than those in the public sector. I have worked for 25 years. I have my own anti-venom in the freezer. If I get bit by my black-headed bushmaster (*Lachesis melanocephala*), I am ready to go.

Carl- Yeah, I don't like the apprenticeship idea. I like the three levels.

Dave- Right, so anyone can apply for a license and the initial inspection will make sure they have the locking room, the locking cages, and the tools necessary to care for these creatures, then...hey, it is only going to take a couple of the right questions to find out if they know what they are doing. Then, before they move to the next level, they have to show something before moving on...

Carl- I think that they should automatically move to the next level if they have been at the lower level for a year. They have already gone through the inspections and been doing it for a year. Just getting the initial license will detract impulse buys and questionable keepers. They have to get the locking cage, have a secure room, and apply for the permit...

Dave- And they will need the license before they buy the animal.

Carl- Exactly. That is a lot of aggravation for someone who just wants to be a show off. And, it accomplishes that without elaborate apprenticeships.

John- When I train handlers with venomous, I look mainly for attitude. Calm, cool, collected, and not being afraid of the animal. It is mainly attitude. We can teach skills but not attitude.

Dave- I used to teach, "If fear gets you bitten, respect keeps you safe."

John- You can easily tell if people are generally interested. If they have a plan in mind, then good.

Tanith- When I do training, I use Nerodia (water snakes); I don't use venomous.

Dave- Personally, I think we are on the right track. I think that maybe we can accomplish this without the apprenticeship. So, let's figure out who fits in what class and what are the classes? What is the inspection?

Daron- I agree with the attitudes thing, but from a regulatory standpoint keep in mind that it needs to be specifically defined as animal captivity to protect public and native wildlife. USDA is in charge of the Animal Welfare Act. We protect native wildlife and the public. Anytime we deny or revoke, then they can appeal through OAH. It must be clear.

Dave- We need to make sure it is unambiguous. If you don't follow X, Y, and Z, you will have your license revoked.

Tanith- Public brandishment, escape, investigational process because of a bite. Good handlers do get bitten. Drugs, alcohol, etc.

John- I don't think you can do that.

Tanith- As far as revoking a permit?

John- Alcohol and drugs

Tanith- What if someone was arrested for drugs or intoxication?

John- I don't think it would be relevant.

Tanith- What about felons?

Carl- I think we are going too far here, we need to talk about caging. I mean are we going to require different caging requirements for tree dwelling species versus ground dwelling species?

Daron- Well, it is kind of like the alligators. Their caging requirements are in the regulations. As long as the facility is longer than the animal on all sides then it is big enough. As long as the water provided allows the alligator to completely submerge itself

then that is appropriate. As long as the cage is adequate enough to protect the public then that is what you are looking at. The very basic dimensions and materials are all that is needed for regulation. Now, as an owner you may want to put fancy things in there that mimic its natural habitat and that is great, but from a regulatory standpoint it is irrelevant and what we want to know is the enclosure going to contain the animal and can the animal exist in that enclosure comfortably?

Dave- Well, let's talk about what these are going to be. Just to go back, what we originally said was this was going to be a species-specific license.

Carl- You can't do it.

Dave- Well, not species specific but category specific. It depends on where they are in the license level...if all the crotalids are in level A then fine but what if these change?

Tanith- We can't say put Crotalid at one level because there are things like *Sistrurus* that is not difficult to maintain and mildly venomous and then *Crotalus* like *horridus*, which can kill you.

Daron- What you would do in that case is, if A, B, or C, then when you get a license at a level then it covers all species in that level. We can't keep up with the entire information just category. And then, all we would want to know is maybe numbers or separate way to track..

Dave- Someone is going to come in your office and say, "I want to keep BLANK".

Daron- They should say that they are applying for a particular level license.

Dave- So they would have to look it up online or something?

Daron- Right. They would send their application in and I would set up a date to inspect the facilities and say you need to have these requirements (caging). I sign off, here is your level C license. Then, he can take that license to the dealer and say, "I am allowed this snake, I want to buy one of them". Then, let's say, he is in it for a year and decides he wants a level B snake. So, he sends in a level B application and I go back to his facility to inspect. He goes through another year and decides he wants a level B license. Same process. I see him once per year and only give him one license per year. Now, you may have some sort of number requirement. That is up to you. Now, if I hear he has a level A and he only has a level C license.

Tanith- I think the realistic thing to do is instead of listing species for all levels, we list only the C and A categories and throw the rest into level B. We can even make level C a small subset of minimally venomous snakes that will allow people to get experience and level A small subset of the most venomous and dangerous snakes.

5 Minute BREAK

The second half of the meeting was accidentally erased. The discussion that followed resulted in the following actions:

Easiest level of Venomous Reptile Licensing- C Family, Genera, and or Species included:

Helodermatidae (beaded lizards)- All species

Colubridae- All species in genus **Boiga** (Austral-Asian cat snakes)

Viperidae-All **Agkistrodon** (copperheads and cottonmouths) and **Sistrurus** (pygmy and massasauga rattlesnakes) species native to the United States of America

Tropical Tree Vipers from the following genera: *Apheris*, *Bothriechis*, *Trimeresurus* (*Tropidolaemus*- Wagler's viper)

Master level of Venomous Reptile Licensing- A Family, Genera, and or Species included:

Hydrophiidae (sea snakes)- All species

Laticaudidae (sea kraits)- All species

Colubridae- All species of *Dispholidus* (boomslang/common African tree snake)

Elapidae (cobras, mambas, etc.)- All species of the cobra genera **Ophiophagus** and **Naja**. **Dendroaspis** (mambas) and all Australian species

General level of Venomous Reptile Licensing- B Family, Genera, and or Species included:

The remaining defined Venomous species.

Discussion about identification and John volunteered to create an identification guide to Level A and C species.

Discussion continued about requiring two letters of reference for out of state applicants.

Inspections will check for cage locks, locking room, and tools. The group agreed to follow Florida laws as a working template.

NCPARC will help the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission with species identification for inspections as an unbiased observer. An initial inspection of facilities will be conducted by the NCWRC for every application, including changing license

classifications. NCWRC reserves the right to inspect at any time and may be done if there is a change in residence.

A report must be submitted annually in order for the license to be renewed. In the annual report, licensee must list the number of each species in captivity as well as the distribution of offspring.

It will be the responsibility of the seller to get a copy of the buyer or receiver's license for any animals sold or given.

Applicants must provide a letter to document their source of antivenom including public and private stocks.

Revocation will be for bites, escapes, and failure to follow reporting requirements and will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Next meeting (November 15, 2006 Eberhart 1:00pm) topics:

Revocation

Costs (including Giant Constrictor Permit and Crocodilian License)

NCPARC's Role

Meeting after next (December 13, 2006 Eberhart 1:00pm) topics: