



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SPCAs Wildlife Unit

PRIMATES DO NOT MAKE SUITABLE PETS – they belong in the wild –



The global trade in primates as pets contributes to depleted wild populations and the individual suffering of the animals involved. For humane, conservation and health and safety reasons, the NSPCA believes that primates should not be kept as pets.

WHAT IS LEGAL?

While this matter is currently under review by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, it is currently legal to keep and sell exotic primates as pets. Permits are required to keep most indigenous animals.

WHAT IS THE NSPCA POLICY?

The NSPCA believes that wild animals should not be kept or bred as pets. Aside from conservation concerns, primates are wild animals and do not make suitable companions in the home, no matter how well-intentioned the owner.

WELFARE CONCERNS

The NSPCA's reasons for believing that primates should not be kept as pets are based on the following :

- Primates are intelligent, complex, social animals that live in groups. Captive situations do not provide the same physical, social or behavioural surroundings and the welfare of primates is compromised. Primates need environments where they are able to find food, to interact with others of their kind and to keep physically fit through climbing and jumping. Most primates kept as pets suffer from boredom due to the lack of stimulus, as confinement also reduces opportunities to explore and forage.
- Primates are long-lived, and depending on the species, can live between 20 and 40 years. This requires long-term commitment from the owner. In many instances the novelty soon wears off and the primate may be re-homed several times during its life. Humanised primates are not easily accepted into social groups and placement in

sanctuaries can be problematic and very stressful for the pet. There are the financial and ethical obligations and considerations surrounding sanctuaries.

- Another scenario that plays out is that the primate is first given the run of the home but at some point the animal will be restricted to a caged environment. This results in physical restriction and social isolation and can be traumatising to these intelligent animals.
- Primates are wild animals and as such they pose health risks to people through the transmission of disease. Primates by nature establish dominant hierarchies and are naturally aggressive which can often result in episodes with human family members, particularly children. They are able to inflict severe injuries to humans. Humanised and pet primates take on the human family as a troop and territorial and hierarchial behaviour can often result in aggressive and protective and destructive behaviours. Most pet primates are surgically 'modified' to make them more acceptable as pets - this includes sterilisation, neutering, teeth and claw removal.
- Psychological and physical deprivation often results in self-mutilation, rocking, and over-grooming.
- Primates require specialised diets and this again, is dependent on the species.
- Primates escape and not only cause injury and distress to themselves but can cause problems for neighbours and place an unnecessary burden on conservation and welfare organisations who are then required to rescue and capture these animals.
- Pet primates may be dumped or 'released' and, being humanised are unable to adequately care for themselves, suffer unnecessarily and become problem animals. There is always a risk of displacement of local primate populations and interbreeding.
- Sadly many pet primates are sourced from the wild (not all are bred in captivity) and may be forcefully removed from the mother.
- The supply of pet primates may involve the removal of the very young animal from the mother with the distress to both mother and young; and sadly, captive rearing and fostering brings its own set of problems.

There are many domesticated animals (dogs and cats) that make wonderful pets and with responsible caring owners, can lead fulfilling lives.

A PRIMATE NEVER FULLY ADAPTS AND IS NOT SUITABLE AS A PET.

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