



Legal Restrictions Impacting Exotic Veterinarians

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Introduction: What Is the Exotic Pet Trade?

- › The exotic pet trade is essentially the trade of animals that aren't "normal" or the common furry 4-legged animals we commonly see.
- › The exotic pet trade can contain animals that range from reptiles and parrots to tigers, primates, foxes, and more.
- › The exotic pet trade contains both ethical and unethical aspects.

Introduction: How Does the Exotic Pet Trade Correlate With Veterinary Medicine?

- › Like all pet owners, when an animal is sick, a veterinarian is needed to provide care and treatment for the pet.
- › Specialty clinics need to be located that provide care to exotic animals.
- › Exotic veterinarians are considered specialists since they primarily see avians, reptiles, and small mammals.

Background Information

As someone who has always been passionate about the veterinary field, specifically exotics, I wanted to choose a topic for my honors project that holds significant meaning to me. Growing up owning exotic animals, specifically parrots, I wanted to create something that informs and educates readers about legal restrictions directed towards exotic animals.

Although laws are put in place to protect exotic animals, I wanted to create something that educates readers that these laws are double sided and can have negative impacts on both exotic owners and exotic veterinarians.

My Studies

I began my research by asking myself the question of “without going into too complex detail, how do I educate a reader about exotic animal restrictions?” and then separated that question into three parts. By separating my initial question into parts, I was able to form a thesis that best allows me to cover all topics that I would research for this project.

For this project, I wanted to specify and be direct about covering only the exotics aspect of veterinary medicine and which restrictions are specific to exotics.

Defining the Exotic Pet Trade

As mentioned before, the exotic pet trade includes the trade of exotic animals and/or products. This is included but not limited to common parrots and reptiles, tigers, primates, and imported animal products such as ivory. I wanted to use a source that is well known across the general public, and chose to use an article published by *National Geographic* to cover the major ethical and unethical aspects of the exotic pet trade.

Using this article, I was able to gather the information that while some may immediately think the exotic pet trade is only negative, conservationists have worked with ethical breeders within the pet trade to attempt to repopulate endangered and threatened species in native areas.

The Main Legal Restrictions Against Exotic Animals

Knowing that there are multiple legal restrictions in place against exotic animals, I wanted to focus on the biggest one. The Lacey Act Amendments is one of the oldest and largest restrictions on the importation and exportation of exotic animals. With recent changes to these amendments, this act could result in severe negative impacts on exotic animal owners. By placing many exotic species on a list that deems them a “threat”, exotic owners would be prohibited to cross state lines with these animals by any means.

Since exotic animals are very good at hiding symptoms of illness until they are in critical condition, reading an article published by student staff at a university allowed me to gather the information that in multiple situations, such strict prohibitions can be negative for both an exotic animal owner and an exotic veterinary clinic.

How Are Exotic Veterinarians Impacted By These Restrictions?

Like all medical institutions, financial loss has no positive side effects. Exotic veterinarians may commonly have regular clients who travel across state lines or long distances to receive care for their pets. If those owners are suddenly unable to visit their regular clinic, that clinic may suffer financial fallout because they do not have enough clients to make sufficient income. Not only do these restrictions impact veterinary clinics, but the owner as well. If the animal owner cannot reach a clinic in time or they are prohibited from crossing state lines to their nearest clinic, they may lose their pet as a result.

From a report written by a university along with general common sense, I came to the conclusion that while these acts and amendments are in the interest of protecting and limiting the transportation of illegal exotic animals, they can result in negative impacts for ethical exotic owners and veterinary businesses.

Conclusion

In conclusion to my studies, I gained better insight to a topic I had originally known little about. As an exotics owner myself, it became crucial to me to educate myself about what legal restrictions can directly impact my pet and I. Through my studies and research, I learned crucial information that many may not think about if they have little to no knowledge about the exotic pet trade. Although I am not a politician, informing myself and others about such legal restrictions is crucial since it will most likely impact me as I continue to study exotic veterinary medicine academically. By combining real world aspects with a topic I have always been interested in and passionate about, I gained insight and information to a side of veterinary care that can become a growing issue in the near future.

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