



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** ORD. 2023-130, **Version:** 1

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To amend ch. 4, art. IV, div. 3 of the City Code by adding therein a new section 4-401, concerning exotic and wild animals.  
(As Amended)

THE CITY OF RICHMOND HEREBY ORDAINS:

§ 1. That Chapter 4, Article IV, Division 3 of the Code of the City of Richmond (2020) be and hereby is amended and reordained by **adding therein a new section** numbered 4-401 as follows:

**Sec. 4-401. Exotic and wild animals.**

(a) For purposes of this section, the term “exotic or wild animal” means any live monkey (non-human primate), raccoon, opossum, skunk, wolf, coyote, squirrel, fox, leopard, panther, tiger, lion, lynx, caracal, bobcat, bear or any other warm-blooded animal which can normally be found in the wild, except birds legally removed from the wild under authorization of a federal or state agency, as well as any venomous or poisonous reptile or amphibian or any member of the crocodilian family, including but not limited to, alligators, crocodiles, caimans and gavials. Ferrets, rabbits, chinchillas, sugar gliders, hedgehogs, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, mice, [and] rats, non-venomous reptiles, amphibians, and fish that have been in captivity and that have never known the wild and domestically bred or legally imported birds, non-venomous reptiles, amphibians, and fish shall not constitute “exotic or wild animals.”

(b) It shall be unlawful for any person to own, breed, purchase, sell, offer for purchase or sale, keep, maintain, or have in such person’s possession or in such person’s control any exotic or wild animal in the city, except for individuals, organizations, zoological parks, performing animal exhibitions, circuses, wildlife rehabilitators, or veterinary clinics that are [property] properly licensed or permitted by the federal government or state government or unless that person previously has obtained a permit issued by the [department] Department for such exotic or wild animal[, except that persons holding a Category I, II, or III Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit and applicable state law].

(c) Any person who keeps an exotic or wild animal in contravention of this section may dispose of the animal by removing the animal permanently from the city of Richmond, or by [giving or selling] relinquishing the animal to a zoological park, [or by releasing the animal to] the Department, [which shall release the animal to the wild, to a zoological park,] or other entity approved for the care and protection of the particular species and that is properly licensed or permitted by the federal government or the state government.

(d) This ordinance shall not apply to employees of federal and state wildlife management agencies, or to employees of private wildlife control companies permitted by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources to possess wild animals while acting in their official capacities.

(e) The owner of a venomous or poisonous reptile or amphibian whose ownership or maintenance began on or before the effective date of the ordinance providing for this section shall be permitted to maintain any such animal, provided, however, that such owner registers such animal with the [department] Department on forms provided by the Director as required by this subsection. In the case of a person who (i) was the owner of such an animal on or before the effective date of the ordinance providing for this section and (ii) has kept or maintained such animal in the city on or before the effective date of the ordinance providing for this section, such person shall register the animal in accordance with this subsection within 180 days after the effective date of the ordinance providing for this section. In the case of a person who, (i) on or before the effective date of the ordinance providing for this section, (a) was the owner of such an animal and (b) resided in another jurisdiction and (ii) first keeps or maintains any such animal in the city after the effective date of the ordinance providing for this section, such person shall register the animal in accordance with this subsection within 180 days after the date on which the owner first kept or maintained such animal in the city.

~~[(e)]~~ (f) Any person convicted of a violation of this section shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor.

§ 2. This ordinance shall be in force and effect upon adoption.