



**Animal and Plant
Health Inspection Service**

4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD 20737
Voice 301-851-4100
Web: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>

News Release

Contact:
Tanya Espinosa (301) 851-4092
Tanya.C.Espinosa@aphis.usda.gov

Suzanne Bond (301) 851-4070
suzanne.m.bond@aphis.usda.gov

USDA Requests Comments on a Petition to Amend the AWA to Prohibit Public Contact with Big Cats, Bears, and Nonhuman Primates

WASHINGTON, August 5, 2013 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is requesting public comments on a petition received from a group of animal welfare stakeholders that requests amendments to the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) regulations. APHIS has been delegated authority to enforce the AWA by the Secretary of Agriculture, who was granted the power to enforce the AWA by Congress under that Act. The AWA requires, among other things, the humane handling, care, treatment and transportation of certain animals by dealers, research facilities, exhibitors, operators of auction sales, carriers, and intermediate handlers.

The petition requests that the AWA regulations prohibit public contact with big cats, bears, and nonhuman primates of any age. This petition is also requesting that the regulations be amended to prohibit the public handling and separation from their dams before weaning unless medically necessary of young or immature big cats, bears, and nonhuman primates.

APHIS is also requesting comments on the following questions:

- Are there circumstances under which public contact with young big cats, bears, and nonhuman primates may be done without risk of harm to the animals or to the public?
- Should exhibitors and dealers be required to keep records other than those already required and if so, what information should be required?
- Should exhibitors and dealers be required to identify big cats, bears, and nonhuman primates by use of tattoos, microchips, retinal scan or other means?

This notice is published in today's *Federal Register*. Consideration will be given to comments received on or before October 4, 2013. Please send your postal mail or commercial delivery comments to Docket No. APHIS-2012-0107, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. If you wish to submit a comment using the Internet go to the Federal eRulemaking portal www.regulations.gov/#!/documentDetail;D=APHIS-2012-0107-0001.

Comments are posted on the Regulations.gov website and may also be reviewed at USDA, Room 1141, South Building, 14th St. and Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. To facilitate entry into the comment reading room, please call 202-799-7039.

#

Note to Reporters: USDA news releases, program announcements, and media advisories are available on the Internet and through Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds. Go to the APHIS news release page at www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom and click on the RSS feed link.