



Loudoun County, Virginia

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NEWS RELEASE

Office of the County Administrator, Public Affairs and Communications
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Board Committee to Consider Prohibiting Certain Exotic and Venomous Animals Dec. 13; Virtual Information Meeting Scheduled Jan. 5

During its meeting on December 13, 2022, the Board of Supervisors' Finance, Government Operations and Economic Development Committee is scheduled to begin considering a new section of Chapter 612 of the Codified Ordinances of Loudoun County that, if adopted, would prohibit private ownership of certain exotic and venomous species of animals that present a risk to public health and safety.

Background

The revised ordinance as drafted would prohibit private ownership of certain types of exotic and venomous animals, such as wolf hybrids, kangaroos, scorpions, baboons, venomous snakes and other venomous reptiles, and non-native venomous spiders. Loudoun County currently does not prohibit the ownership of these animals by ordinance; however, similar ordinances already exist in the Town of Leesburg; Arlington, Fairfax and Prince William counties; the District of Columbia; and jurisdictions in Maryland.

The proposed ordinance also prohibits the breeding of such animals. Virginia law already restricts private ownership of many other wild and exotic animals, such as big cats and bears. The proposed ordinance would not impact entities that are licensed or permitted through the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources or other state or federal agencies to house restricted species, such as zoos, exhibitors or rehabilitators.

Members of the committee will also consider whether to allow current owners of the listed animals to keep them upon registration through a process the county would establish to ensure awareness by first responders and other interested parties in the event of an emergency. Currently, a violation of Chapter 612 is a class 4 misdemeanor, which is punishable by a fine of up to \$250.

In November 2022, the Board of Supervisors' Animal Advisory Committee voted unanimously to support the staff proposal for a new section of the ordinance, which is being proposed by the Department of Animal Services (LCAS), whose humane law enforcement officers have encountered venomous animals when responding to routine calls for service. LCAS identified a public safety concern after learning no effective anti-venom is readily available in Loudoun County. Informing the proposed ordinance is LCAS officers' collective experience investigating complaints involving wolf-hybrids, scorpions, monkeys and venomous snake species, which indicates that exotic and venomous species are present in Loudoun County residential settings.

December 13 Committee Meeting

The Board's Finance, Government Operations and Economic Development Committee is held at 6:00 p.m. in the Board Room of the Government Center, located at 1 Harrison Street, SE, in Leesburg.

Members of the public may read the [staff report](#) posted in the [meeting's documents](#) at loudoun.gov/meetings.

The public may watch the meeting on cable TV (Comcast Government Channel 23 or Verizon FiOS channel 40) or watch a livestream of the meeting at loudoun.gov/meetings.

Virtual Public Information Meeting January 5

LCAS plans to host a virtual public information meeting on Thursday, January 5, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. Attendees will receive a brief overview of the proposed addition to Chapter 612. In addition, members of the public may ask questions and provide feedback to staff regarding the proposal. Details for joining the virtual meeting will be posted in advance of the meeting date at loudoun.gov/calendar.

Next Steps

The December 13 committee meeting is the first step in the process for consideration and possible adoption of changes to Loudoun's ordinances. Following the committee's consideration, the full Board of Supervisors is expected to review the proposed new section in early 2023. Prior to adopting changes, the Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing during which members of the public may provide feedback for the Board's consideration.

More information about signing up to speak to the Board during public meetings and providing input to the Board any time is posted on the county's website at loudoun.gov/signuptospeak.

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