



## Loudoun County, Virginia

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## NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release  
January 18, 2023

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### **Board of Supervisors to Hold Public Hearing on Proposed Addition to Animals Ordinance Feb. 15**

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors is scheduled to hold a public hearing February 15, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. on a proposed new section of Chapter 612, Dogs and Other Animals, of the Codified Ordinances of Loudoun County. If adopted, the new section of ordinance would prohibit private ownership of certain exotic and venomous species of animals that present a risk to public health and safety.

The February 15 public hearing will be held in the Board Room of the Loudoun County Government Center, 1 Harrison St. SE in Leesburg. Meeting documents will be posted online at least three days before the meeting at [loudoun.gov/meetings](http://loudoun.gov/meetings). Members of the public may attend in person or watch the meeting online or on the county's cable TV channel (Comcast Government Channel 23 or Verizon FiOS 40).

#### **Provide Input on Proposed Ordinance Text**

Members of the public may provide feedback to the Board of Supervisors on the proposed new section of the county's ordinances in a variety of ways:

- **Sign Up to Speak at the Public Hearing:** To provide input and comment on the current draft text, members of the public can sign up to speak at the public hearing. Information about how to sign up to speak in advance at the Board of Supervisors' public hearing is posted at [loudoun.gov/signuptospeak](http://loudoun.gov/signuptospeak).
- **Contact the Board of Supervisors:** Members of the public may provide comment to the Board of Supervisors at any time by email at [bos@loudoun.gov](mailto:bos@loudoun.gov) or by calling the Board's Comment Line at 703-777-0115.
- **Submit Comments Online:** A convenient online comment form is available at [loudoun.gov/Chapter612addition](http://loudoun.gov/Chapter612addition). Comments submitted through the online form will be provided to the Board of Supervisors.

Following the February 15 public hearing, the Board of Supervisors could adopt the proposed changes or send the proposed changes to a future Board meeting for further discussion.

#### **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.

The proposed addition would also allow current owners of the listed animals to keep them but would require those animals be registered through a process the county would establish to ensure awareness by first responders 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 Loudoun County 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 anti-venom for non-native snakes is not 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.

### **For More Information**

More information, including a video of the presentation given during a virtual public information meeting hosted by LCAS on January 5, 2023, and a link to the online comment form, is posted at [loudoun.gov/Chapter612addition](https://loudoun.gov/Chapter612addition).

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