

WDFW Help

Is it legal to own or possess exotic wildlife in Washington?

•

Unless authorized by rule by the Fish and Wildlife Commission, the department prohibits the importation/possession of certain deleterious or exotic species of animals from entering Washington State. These include, but are not limited to, fish (such as piranha), reptiles (alligators, snapping turtles), some amphibians, and some mammals. This is not a complete list. For a complete list of these animals, see Washington Administrative Codes [220-12-090](#), [232-12-017](#), [232-12-01701](#) and Revised Code of Washington [16-30-010](#).

Additionally, in response to communicable diseases, the Department of Health has prohibited the importation/possession of species known to carry rabies. In response to those animal trafficking networks and unknown origins, in order to protect human health/safety to Washingtonians, DOH has prohibited additional species.

Per [WAC 246-100-197, subsection 5\(b\)](#) it states; All persons are prohibited from importing into the state any bat, skunk, fox, raccoon, or coyote, unless it is a bona fide zoological park, animal exhibitor, or research facility and an entry permit has been issued by the director of the Department of Agriculture in consultation with the Secretary of the Department of Health. Fox is the common name and includes all species.

- [WAC 232-12-017](#) lists the deleterious exotic wildlife that may not be possessed, held, transported, sold, or propagated in Washington.
- In addition, [WAC 232-12-064](#) has rules regulating the taking, importing, possession, transfer, and holding of live wildlife.
- You may also check with the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#).
- When there is no specific city, county, state or federal prohibitions for the fish or animals, you can legally possess the fish or animals.
- A person is guilty of unlawful transportation of fish or wildlife if he/she knowingly imports, moves within the state, or exports fish, shellfish, or wildlife in violation of any rule of the Fish and Wildlife Commission or the WDFW Director governing the transportation or movement of fish, shellfish, or wildlife, and the transportation involves big game, endangered or protected fish or wildlife, deleterious exotic wildlife, or fish, shellfish, or wildlife having a value greater than \$250 ([RCW 77.15.290](#) (2)(a)).
- A person is guilty of unlawfully releasing, planting, or placing fish, shellfish, or wildlife if the person knowingly releases plants or places live fish, shellfish, wildlife, or aquatic plants within the state ([RCW 77.15.250](#), [WAC 232-12-271](#)).
- A person is guilty of unlawful release of deleterious exotic wildlife if the person knowingly releases, plants, or places live fish, shellfish, aquatic plants, or wildlife within the state, and such fish, shellfish, or wildlife has been classified as deleterious exotic wildlife by rule of the Fish and Wildlife Commission ([RCW 77.15.250](#), [WAC 232-12-017](#)).
- It is against the law to transport live fish or live wildlife without a permit to do so from WDFW.

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/help/questions/150/>