

Ottawa, February 28, 2002

Christine Hartig  
Project/Policy Officer  
By-law Services  
City of Ottawa  
Heritage Building 1st Floor  
110 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 1J1

Dear Ms. Hartig:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Ottawa Amphibian and Reptile Association concerning the upcoming exotic animal by-laws for the amalgamated City of Ottawa.

The Ottawa Amphibian and Reptile Association is a club of approximately fifty reptile and amphibian enthusiasts. Our membership includes passionate pet keepers and dedicated field naturalists, and ranges from beginners to serious reptile breeders and professional herpetologists. Since 1983 our members have volunteered for research and conservation projects and set up educational displays. Our public displays have been featured at the National Capital Wildlife Festival, the Great Animal Adventure, the Central Canada Exhibition, and Environment Week.

On behalf of our members, I recommend that the City of Ottawa adopt the City of Toronto's animal by-law (By-law 28-1999, *A By-law respecting animals*) as a model for its new by-law. Insofar as reptiles and amphibians are concerned, the Toronto by-law prohibits the following animals:

- snakes with an adult length greater than three metres;
- lizards with an adult length greater than two metres;
- crocodilians; and
- venomous animals.

We believe that the Toronto by-law is a good approach for the following reasons:

1. It has already served as a model for other municipalities and is rapidly becoming a provincial standard for municipal animal control.
2. It has the rare distinction of satisfying stakeholders from all sides of the argument.

Both exotic animal keepers and animal rights activists were in support of this version of the by-law in Toronto.

3. It is simple and clear, therefore easy and inexpensive to enforce. Other models may require additional resources and training, but with this model, what is legal and what is illegal is relatively straightforward; for nonvenomous snakes and lizards only a tape measure will be required.
4. It prohibits only reptiles and amphibians that pose a reasonable risk to human health, and does not prohibit harmless animals. As a result it is more likely to be complied with. If keeping a rosy boa (a small and extremely gentle animal that would make a wonderful pet for children) is as illegal as keeping a black mamba, will the ban on the latter be taken seriously if the former is also banned?

In addition, we would also recommend that the City of Ottawa prohibit the sale of green iguanas (*Iguana iguana*) less than 75 centimetres in length. This had been proposed by the Ontario Exotic Pet Council for the Toronto by-law but it failed to make it into the final version. The number of abandoned adult green iguanas is staggering; for example, Reptile Rescue, based in Burlington, Ontario, has found homes for nearly 500 iguanas since they opened in June 1999. Baby iguanas' low pet-store price (around \$30 to 40) encourages impulse purchases by people who are not prepared for their eventual large size, aggressive behaviour, and specialized care. Prohibiting the sale of young iguanas will stem the flow of new iguanas while permitting responsible iguana keepers to continue to look after their adult iguanas, and allow abandoned iguanas to find new homes.

I would be more than willing to discuss these proposals further, whether in person or by telephone. I would also appreciate it if I could be advised of any public meetings on this subject, where I and the Association would be happy to present our position. I can be reached as follows:

Mailing address: Jonathan Crowe, President  
Ottawa Amphibian and Reptile Association  
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More information on the Ottawa Amphibian and Reptile Association can be found at our web site at <http://www.ottawaherps.com/oara/>, and our club's e-mail address is [oara@ottawaherps.com](mailto:oara@ottawaherps.com).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Crowe  
President  
Ottawa Amphibian and Reptile Association