

From: [Hazel Tove](#)
To: [FGC](#)
Subject: Re: RE: RE: Request and comment
Date: Wednesday, March 18, 2015 2:42:23 PM

Thank you again for your fast response. I really appreciate the time taken to read and respond to my concerns,

To give some possible insight, I think a lot of people take the risk because they either came into the state without being aware of the law or they simply really love ferrets and do not believe they pose the risk that it is claimed they do because there is the lack of evidence to that effect.

The point of me making that statement was mainly to highlight that there are already thousands of ferrets introduced in California so they are already there. So, it's not a matter of preventing them from coming in, it's far too late for that but rather about setting strict rules that gives the government control over the ownership of ferrets already there while also not disproportionately punishing people who would like to own them.

These people aren't criminals but just everyday normally law-abiding citizens aside from this one blip. This is because people that own ferrets have not seen any solid evidence that there is any good reasons to ban ferrets while more damaging species like cats and dogs are free for all. It doesn't make logical sense and doesn't seem fair as I'm sure you agree.

My personal stance is that yes caution should most definitely be taken to protect the local wildlife. But I also definitely think that this is possible to do while also allowing some people to own ferrets. I believe that as long as proper procedures are put in place, strict rules, and owners monitored closely then there's no indication that ferrets would cause as big an issue as claimed they would.

None of the other states and majority of countries around the world have reported major issues with pet ferrets with the exception of Australia and New Zealand but this was because they introduced feral ferrets into their own wildlife which is not at all the same as having GPS tracked, sterile, domesticated, closely monitored pet ferrets.

Just apply strict rules roughly as outlined below:

- 1.** No more than two ferrets per household.
- 2.** Every household that owns ferrets needs a permit to keep ferrets. To acquire a permit a house is checked by registered volunteers paid for by the applicant, to ensure it's ferret proof. Owners will also be thoroughly questioned on ferret care, if they do not have adequate amount of knowledge they will be denied the permit. Especially in regards to preventing ferrets from escaping, and the potential danger ferrets pose to babies.
- 3.** Each ferret has to be registered, neutered/spayed by the age of 6 months, micro-chipped, and vaccinated for rabbies.
- 4.** Each ferret is required to wear a collar/harness with a GPS tracking device attached to it when outside, even when caged or held. They should always be properly leashed or caged when outside and should be supervised.
- 5.** Ferrets are not allowed to be kept outside permanently or stay home alone without an appropriate lock on their cage AND the room they are kept in. They are only allowed to be outside for the purpose of travelling to places, and short-term supervised play time/walks.
- 6.** Ferrets won't be allowed in public areas with children under 5. Otherwise only with the permission of the individual establishments owners. On sidewalks, ferrets need to be kept away from young children under the age of 5 at all times.
- 7.** Owners are not allowed to take ferrets to other peoples homes unless there are no children under the age of 5 present and the visit is pre-approved by the houses owner. The ferrets will have to remain in an enclosure/leashed and supervised by their owner for the duration of the visit and the visit has to be short-term.
- 8.** Breeding of ferrets is only allowed to be done by approved registered breeders and rescues. Private owners are not allowed to breed ferrets.
- 9.** Mandatory annual vet checks to ensure wellness as well as to confirm that the ferrets are still within the household/not lost. If a ferret dies it has to be verified and recorded. Paid for by the owner.
- 10.** People can't apply if they have children under the age of 5, but existing permits can remain if a birth occurs after a permit has been granted.

11. Ferrets CAN be looked after by other permit holders for up to four weeks provided they have the arrangement set in writing and signed. If ferrets outstay the four weeks they can be confiscated and the owner of the ferrets will have to pay fines. Exception can be made in emergencies such as a house fire in which case a non permit holder may look after the ferrets over a 48 hour period provided that they remain caged at all times. It should be advised that permit holders have a contingency plan in case of an emergency.

12. Anyone with a permit caught breaking these rules, depending on severity, will be fined or have their ferret confiscated and could be banned from keeping ferrets for 3 years. After the 3 year period they have one more chance to re-apply for a permit.

13. Anyone without a permit caught will have their ferrets immediately confiscated although they can assist rehoming them within a 3 month period. Housed and paid for by the illegal owner, otherwise they will be euthanized. They will also be banned from keeping ferrets for 5 years and have to pay a large fine per ferret confiscated.

14. If permit holders who are on their second chance fail to comply with the rules again, they will be banned from keeping ferrets for life and fined appropriately.

15. Current ferret owners, starting from the date these rules are implemented have 6 months to prepare for and apply for a permit and if the deadline is not met rule 13 is applied. They are allowed to keep their ferrets once applied and waiting for processing. If they fail their first check they can re-apply, if failed again rule 14 applies. Future ferret owners are only allowed to acquire ferrets after the permit has been granted.

The above rules set out would reward good ownership and demonstrate the owners willingness to follow strict rules. Otherwise it would still be illegal to own ferrets as is the case right now. This strict set of rules would at least give good owners a chance to own their ferrets legally and remain law-abiding citizens. I can guarantee plenty of owners would rather go through this amount of red tape and pay fees than be thought of as criminals.

I'm happy to hear that there are plans to bring this issue forward again in December. I'm sure the entire commission is pretty tired of dealing with it (*as I'm sure the Californian ferret owners are also*). So, Perhaps the above rules could be printed out and used during the meeting as an outline for establishing legal ferret ownership laws without continuing the outright ban.

I hope that you will consider my rule proposals as a good start for law amendment. I am hopeful that it can work and that a compromise along these lines can be made.

Kind Regards,

Hazel

Sent: Wednesday, March 18, 2015 at 5:57 PM
From: FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>
To: ""Hazel Tove"" [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: RE: Request and comment

Regarding "the reality is that there are already thousands of ferrets in California and that's not going to change any time soon," ferrets owners reported/identified in California are taking the risk of having their pets destroyed.

The other recommendations you raise are good points but all have been considered in depth in the recent past. The Commission annually hears requests to legalize ferrets as pets in California (along with other issues) and votes as to whether the current commission will consider a regulatory change during the course of the calendar year. This item was heard at the December 3, 2014 meeting, and again rejected for consideration in 2015. We fully expect that the issue will be voted on again at the commission's December 10, 2015 meeting in San Diego, for a proposed consideration in 2016.

From: Hazel Tove [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, March 18, 2015 9:31 AM
To: FGC
Subject: Re: RE: Request and comment

Thank you so much for your response,

I can understand that concern and I'm completely on the same page as you on this but the reality is that there are already thousands of ferrets in California and that's not going to change any time soon. It would be better for the wildlife if this was monitored better, don't you agree? If you actually know roughly how many there are and where they are you would have far better control over the situation.

It would be far better if ferrets required a permit to own, to be sterilized, caged or leashed when outside, and you could make it a requirement that ferrets are equipped with a GPS tracking device at the owners expense, when not in a secure cage/ferret proof indoor enclosure (*similar to certain dogs needing to be muzzled/leashed*). Anyone found to possess a ferret that doesn't meet this requirement would still break the law and have their ferrets confiscated, same if an owner with a permit loses a ferret, any other ferrets would be confiscated and a several year ownership ban could be applied and only lifted if the house is deemed suitably ferret proofed.

For example, this could be used to track ferrets, the tech to do this is already there at an affordable cost:

<https://www.thetrackr.com/bravo/checkout?locale=en>

If all pet ferrets were registered and were being tracked when not in their enclosures would you consider overturning the complete ban on ferret ownership? I think that would be a fair compromise and would cost the state less than having to confiscate, look after, and ship out ferrets to other states, or euthanize them.

Especially if registered ferret volunteer groups and vets are assigned the task to distribute permits with the cost being on the owners. You're essentially wasting money on an issue that could easily be solved in this manner when that money is needed for more important things and attention, plus you could go back to more important wildlife issues. Actually, the money that would be made from charging ferret owners for these services would GIVE money to the state which you are now losing out on because they are illegal.

Sounds like a win-win situation for all parties involved. You save money, you can monitor the ferret population better, responsible owners can feel safer knowing where their ferrets are, and they don't have to be afraid of having them confiscated. Plus, because they are sterile they can't breed and cause feral pet ferret populations (*Which have never been recorded as happening in the US to begin with, as far as I've read*).

This rewards good pet ownership and it would be so much better if we worked together on this rather than banging heads against a brick wall forever more because I don't think ferret owners are going to stop bringing this issue up any time soon, I'm sure from what I've read you're painfully aware of that by now. So we might as well find a solution sooner rather than later and I feel that my above solution is fairly easy and fair.

At the end of the day, The truth is that such a blanket cover law punishes responsible pet ownership disproportionately when cats are even more damaging to wildlife and allowed to run free, and dogs attack and kill people hundreds of times more likely than ferrets ever have, they are far less damaging pets to own (*as you no doubt know all too well*). You could say that it's almost discriminatory to punish ferret owners but not the cat and dog owners. Not to mention that escaped ferrets usually die because they're too domesticated to begin with so the risk is minimal, and as I said they're already in California so they have already been introduced.

I really believe we can work together and strike this compromise.

I really, really hope you will consider this proposal and perhaps consider bringing it up in a meeting it would be a fairly quick way to resolve this issue.

I hope to hear back from you,

Sincerely,

Hazel

(P.S. -Keeping my fingers crossed-)

Sent: Wednesday, March 18, 2015 at 2:44 PM
From: FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>
To: "Hazel Tove" [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Request and comment

Thank you for your e-mail.

California "is home to the largest food and agriculture economy in the nation" and "is one of the most biologically diverse areas in the world." Therefore, the introduction of exotic, alien, or invasive species is a serious concern in California. We have seen increasing threats to endangered wildlife by the expanding population of non-native red fox in recent decades. Also, recent introductions into California of detrimental animals such as the northern pike (mid 1980s), Chinese mitten crab (1993), European green crab (1989), and the potential invasion by zebra mussels, have heightened public awareness of how damaging and expensive introduced species can become.

The current laws have been on the books for 80 years, however the Commission has often reevaluated these laws. The California Fish and Game Commission, at its April 6, 2000, meeting in Sacramento, listened to a request by Californians for Ferret Legalization that the Commission consider removing ferrets from the restricted species list. As explained at the meeting, a regulatory action by the Commission is considered a project under the California Environmental Quality Act, which requires the preparation of an environmental document. Therefore, at the conclusion of public testimony, the Commission directed the Californians for Ferret Legalization, as project proponents, to fund the preparation of the environmental document to assess the potential impact to the environment of this proposed action. The Commission would not be in a position to again consider this matter until such an environmental document were prepared.

For many years, ferret owners and enthusiasts have been lobbying for a change in California law to allow importation and ownership of ferrets for pet purposes. Assembly Bill AB 2497 (Goldsmith) was introduced in 1994; Senate Bill SB 55 (Kopp) was introduced in 1995; AB 363 (Goldsmith) was introduced in 1997; and Assembly Bill AB 854 (Cunneen) was introduced in 1999. All failed passage.

As an alternative to ferret legalization bills, AB 409 (Machado), as amended July 15, 1998, would have given the Fish and Game Commission in cooperation with the Department of Food and Agriculture and the California Department of Health Services, sole authority to regulate the importation, transportation and possession of all "restricted" animals, including the ferret. This bill also failed passage.

Most of the more than 50 non-native species of terrestrial mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians that now breed in the wild in California are kinds that were imported for pets or ornamental purposes

and eventually escaped or were purposely released. California is now home to feral breeding populations of many types of domestic animals that had been released or escaped into the wild. Of the 22 species of non-native mammals that now exist in established breeding populations in California, 9 (over 40%) are from domestic stock: domestic rabbit, house cat, horse, burro, cattle, domestic sheep, swine, domestic goat, and fallow deer.

For more extensive information please see https://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/nuis_exo/ferret/.

From: Hazel Tove [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2015 5:32 PM
To: FGC
Subject: Request and comment

Hello,

I'm set to move to California from another state and I was surprised to find out that pet ferrets are still illegal in California? Is this just a backdated issue based on outdated information from decades ago and that it has yet to be legalized? I just had a look and it's legal to own ferrets in all other states aside from Hawaii and most of the world which should be a testament to the fact that ferrets do not cause issues.

I'm just really baffled by this, what are the reasons behind this and when can I expect it to be legalized? I owned ferrets for many years and I can't possibly see why they would be illegal while cats or dogs aren't when they cause a lot more damage than ferrets. Would I really be made a criminal for owning them? To me that seems like a vastly disproportionate punishment for owning a ferret and I'm really confused by the decision to continue to make ownership illegal.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

Hazel, a concerned ferret owner.