

➤ 'exotic animals' as they are commonly kept and bred in reasonably large quantities as companion pets," he said. "These types of native wildlife have been bred in captivity between 40 and in many cases for over 100 years in Australia, and are no longer wild animals. These species have been proven to make great and suitable pets all around the world and pose no risk to poaching of wild populations."

Pet stores that sell native animals must also operate under a Fauna Dealer licence and keep record of where the pets came from and their future home.

"PIAA member stores are obliged and are willing to take back native pets should circumstances change in the customers' homes. Pet stores need to work under strict housing/ husbandry conditions, and we encourage government to ensure pet shops remain licenced and are audited by government and welfare agencies," said Fraser. "PIAA retailers work under POCTA and are transparent in every way. At any time, an authority can view store records, inspect the premises and seek to inspect those who breed and keep pets."

Fraser said protocols for rehoming or surrendering of reptiles need to be put in place from the outset. He also encouraged pet stores to become 'PIAA Companion Animal Centres' where they run education courses and take back 'native species' pets and rehome.

One could ask, how many species now extinct in Australia might still be with us if we had taken them in as companions? Others would argue that if a species survives only in captivity, it is effectively extinct.

What about focusing on the feral cat crisis? These feline hunters are a serious threat to wildlife, killing more than 2,000 native animals every minute across Australia⁴!

According to the Department of Environment and Energy, "The health of our environment relies on the harmonious inter-relationship of all species within a given habitat. With good pet management and public awareness, the needs of domestic and native animals can both be met."

Unless we see a change in government laws and strategies on how we should interact with nature and manage our pets (ie dogs and cats) in the environment, the future may see native animals exist only in zoos.

Pet Industry News would like to hear your views on the topic. Please email to bob@petnews.com.au ■

WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN AUSTRALIA

Wildlife trafficking is a global problem. Interpol has estimated the extent of the illegal wildlife trade to be between \$15 billion and \$29 billion per year, according to a spokesperson from the Department of the Environment and Energy.

Tragically, the exotic pet trade has made some species, like African Grey parrots, critically endangered or even locally extinct. According to World Animal Protection's report, 99% of the wild grey parrot population in Ghana has been wiped out!

Despite having the highest level of protection with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), African grey parrots are one of the most illegally trafficked birds with an estimated 2 - 3 million deemed to have been poached from the wild over the last 40 years².

TRAFFIC, the leading wildlife trade organisation, now recognises social media as the new 'new epicentre' for trade in exotic pets.

"Australia has some of the strongest wildlife protection laws in the world and is not identified as a major source or transit country for wildlife trafficking," said the Department spokesperson. The Department also has not seen an increase in wildlife seizures over the past decade.

"Australia is working internationally to combat illegal wildlife trade to ensure that the penalties match the seriousness of the crime, and to make sure international organised crime groups can't keep the profits from illegal wildlife trade," said the spokesperson.

Australia is a strong supporter of CITES and has been a signatory (among 182 plus other countries) to the Convention since 1976. Australia implements its obligations under CITES through its national environment law, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

The maximum penalty for wildlife trade offences under the Act is 10 years imprisonment and \$210,000 for individuals (\$1,050,000 for corporations). Penalties of five years imprisonment and \$210,000 for an individual (\$1,050,000 for corporations) may apply for the possession of specimens that have been illegally imported.

"Over the past three financial years, more than 4,445 seizure and caution notices were issued at Australia's international border checkpoints for the import of suspected CITES specimen without appropriate permission," said the spokesperson.

"The seizures primarily resulted from suspected breaches at Australian Airports, Seaports and International Mail Exchanges of specimens protected under CITES. Most of the breaches are minor and include souvenir trinkets and other personal items including some purchased via the Internet."

¹ BIODIVERSITY LEGISLATION REVIEW OEH PAPER 6: WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

² WORLD ANIMAL PROTECTION REPORT: WILD AT HEART: THE CRUELTY OF THE EXOTIC PET TRADE.

³ WWW.KB.RSPCA.ORG.AU/IS-IT-ACCEPTABLE-TO-KEEP-NATIVE-ANIMALS-AS-PETS_132.HTML

⁴ WWW.AUSTRALIANWILDLIFE.ORG/FIELD-UPDATES/2018/FERAL-CATS-KILL-OVER-2-000-NATIVE-ANIMALS-EVERY-MINUTE.ASPX