



Press Release

For Immediate Release

Landmark Bill Re-Introduced in Ontario to Protect Captive Wildlife and Regulate Zoos

TORONTO, ON [May 29, 2025] – Two Ontario MPPs have taken a groundbreaking step towards improving animal welfare and public safety with the introduction of the Captive Wildlife Protection Act, 2025. [World Animal Protection](#), a global leader in animal welfare, joined MPPs Lucille Collard, MPP for Ottawa-Vanier, Karen McCrimmon, MPP for Kanata-Carleton, and Dolf DeJong, CEO of the Toronto Zoo to announce the bill today.

The Act aims to address the lack of provincial oversight for captive wildlife, which currently allows anyone to collect wild animals like lions and tigers and operate as a zoo, resulting in the proliferation of dangerous and cruel “roadside zoos”. These attractions often keep wild animals in substandard conditions, risking public safety and causing animal suffering. Ontario is the [weakest jurisdiction](#) when it comes to regulating the keeping of wild animals, and so it’s no surprise then that Ontario is home to the highest number of these dangerous facilities across Canada. No licence or permit is needed to keep non-native wild animals in a zoo, leaving municipalities to manage with ineffective and inconsistent bylaws. Shockingly—[anyone can own a zoo in Ontario](#). Furthermore, Ontario is also the weakest jurisdiction for not having public safety standards or strong enough, adequately enforced animal welfare standards.

The proposed bill introduces mandatory licensing for zoos, along with annual inspections to enforce high standards of care and safety. It also prohibits the use of wild animals for entertainment purposes, such as petting sessions, photo opportunities and performances that compromise their welfare. Facilities will be required to meet clear licensing requirements, including proof of financial resources and emergency preparedness plans.

The bill covers well-known locations and tourist attractions, all the way down to backyard operations. Under this bill, attractions like **Marineland**—an entertainment park that keeps marine and terrestrial animals captive, with a deeply concerning record of animal welfare practices and a string of animal deaths—would almost entirely cease to exist. It represents a major shift towards protecting vulnerable animals and creating safer communities across Ontario.

Quotes

"Ontario has a troubling history of unregulated facilities keeping wild animals in unsafe and inhumane conditions. The Captive Wildlife Protection Act is a critical step to protect animals and safeguard our communities." – *Colin Saravanamuttoo, Executive Director, World Animal Protection*

"Keeping exotic wild animals in inadequate conditions is not only harmful to the animals but also dangerous for the public. Owning and caring for wild animals should be restricted to qualified individuals and organizations who are subject to proper government oversight. It is long past time for Ontario to implement a regulatory framework for the keeping of wild animals in order to ensure the well-being of the animals and keep the public safe." – *Lucille Collard, MPP for Ottawa-Vanier*

"We owe our communities the safety and peace of mind that comes with properly regulated zoos. That means safety for guests, for employees, and for animals. The humane treatment of these exotic animals is not a burden, but the bare minimum for a safe and ethical industry in Ontario." – *Karen McCrimmon, MPP for Kanata-Carleton*

"The safety and well-being of both animals and people depend on these regulations. This act sends a clear message: substandard conditions and neglect have no place in Ontario. As wildlife advocates, we are committed to being a leader in wildlife conservation and education. Your Toronto Zoo strongly supports these steps to protect animals and communities alike." – *Dolf DeJong, CEO, Toronto Zoo*

Quick Facts

- Ontario has approximately 30 roadside zoos—more than any other province in Canada—operating without provincial license and much regulation.
- 88% of Ontarians support provincial licensing and oversight of zoos.
- Nearly half of Ontario's municipalities have no bylaws governing the keeping of wild animals, leaving communities vulnerable to safety risks.
- Roadside zoos often house wild animals in substandard conditions, leading to psychological distress and safety risks for animals and visitors.
- There is no centralized registry in Ontario tracking where exotic animals are kept or how many exist in captivity, leaving communities vulnerable to unreported escapes and safety incidents.
- The Captive Wildlife Protection Act 2025, brings Ontario in line with regulations in other provinces for the treatment of captive animals, setting a precedent for better welfare protections.
- This legislation is supported by leading animal welfare organizations, municipalities and cross-party members of the Ontario Legislature.

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About World Animal Protection

World Animal Protection is an international animal welfare charity with 75 years of experience advocating for the humane treatment of animals worldwide. In Canada, the organization works to protect wild and farm animals through evidence-based solutions that benefit both animals and people.

We have been assessing the conditions of zoos in Canada and advocating for stronger regulations for three decades. We have been members of the Ontario government's animal welfare advisory table to provide input on animal welfare regulations and standards, to further improve the lives of animals across the province.

About the Toronto Zoo

At your Toronto Zoo, we envision a world where people, animals and wild species thrive. Our mission is to connect people, animals, conservation science and traditional knowledge to fight extinction.

The reality for many species is simple: Out of sight, out of mind and off the planet. Climate change and biodiversity loss are accelerating at an alarming rate, and we know we can make a difference. Over the last 50 years, we have hosted over 60 million guests, creating memories that last a lifetime while educating them about the realities facing our planet, and what they can do to help. Our Zoo is a zoo for all, a place for people from all walks of life to join us in our mission to create meaningful and lasting change, and to become Guardians of Wild.

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