



## Wild Animals are NOT Pets

### Adopt a Pet, Not a Problem

# Big Cat Fact Sheet

### Problem:

It is estimated that there are 10,000 to 20,000 large, wild cats in private ownership in the United States. By their nature, large cats (lions, tigers, cougars, jaguars, cheetahs, and panthers) do not make good pets. Keeping large, wild and exotic cats as pets is both dangerous for people and inhumane for animals.

### Facts:

- There have been multiple incidents of injury and death. For example, in two separate incidents, a 3 year old boy and a 9 year old girl were killed by pet tigers in Texas. Another toddler had his arm bitten off by a pet tiger, and a 4 year old boy in New York underwent plastic surgery on his face after he was attacked by a 40-pound pet serval being taken for a walk.
- The average pet owner cannot provide appropriate housing, secure containment, adequate nutrition, appropriate medical care and cannot meet the complex social, emotional, and behavioral requirements of large, wild cats.
- Many large cats suffer from painful declawing and dental extractions for the sole purpose of making them less dangerous pets.
- Tiger cubs bred in captivity are typically separated from their mothers when they are just days old and soon after are declawed. In the wild, cubs can stay with their mothers for three years.
- Adult cats that have been kept as pets are often discarded and can end up in substandard roadside zoos and pseudo-sanctuaries, or with some other private owner. Some are killed for their organs, body parts, and meat.
- Unregulated breeding of large cats—particularly tigers—decreases the genetic viability of the species. These animals are of no use to accredited zoo breeding programs or to the wild gene pool. These animals cannot be released into the wild.



- Few people have the facilities or expertise to care for these dangerous wild animals and most large cats live out their lives alone in squalid, cramped enclosures.
- There are no federal regulations in the U.S. banning or controlling private ownership of large cats, or exotic animal ownership in general. Twelve states ban private possession of exotic animals, seven states have a partial ban, and fifteen require a license or permit.

### Solution

- Never buy a large, wild cat for a pet.
- Do not patronize substandard unaccredited facilities that exhibit large cats.
- Report suspected dangerous housing or abuse of large, wild cats to local humane societies or animal control officers.
- Support appropriate legislation to regulate the ownership of wild animals as pets.

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