

## Bird Ban in Missouri Under Revision, Rep. Says

### **Bills would ban Missouri residents from possessing parrots**

*By BirdChannel News Division*

Bird species mentioned in the bill includes budgies (parakeets) as "wild animals."

The pet industry, particularly the bird and exotics market, is watching legislation introduced in Missouri earlier this year that appears to ban ownership of popular pet animals, such as parrots and reptiles. The proposal, Missouri House bill No. 1847 and companion Senate bill No. 1032, bans the state's residents from selling, trading or possessing any animal it defines as wild.

Although the bill states that "Wild animals shall not include companion animals," it further says that a wild animal is "any live animal that is wild by nature, whether bred in the wild or in captivity and whether or not native to Missouri." The bill then goes on to specifically list all venomous reptiles and "parrots, parakeets, finches, doves and pigeons, and canaries," as wild animals.

These conflicting definitions are what have some pet groups concerned.

"A ban on specifically named species, such as parakeets, parrots, finches and canaries is bad enough, but the way this bill is currently crafted all birds and reptiles are banned," the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council wrote in a Pet Alert. "It does not matter whether that is the intent, it will be the law if this bill passes without amendments."

The American Federation of Aviculture, which represents bird breeders, voiced similar concerns saying in a memo to its members that if the bill passes it will "eventually end bird breeding and bird keeping in Missouri."

The Missouri legislator who introduced the bill, however, says if the bill makes it to committee – it has not yet been assigned – it will be revised to remove pet birds and some other pets.

"The language regarding birds will be changed in committee (should the bill receive a hearing) so that birds will be listed among the exempted animals (along with gerbils, for example)," Rep. Beth Low said in an e-mail.

The bill's text can be found here, but some of the companion animals it exempts include dogs, cats, fish, hamsters, rabbits, some feral animals and some turtles. Non-human primates, "Crocodilia," and some specific reptile species, including some pythons would also be banned under the new definition.

Ownership of non-domesticated "felidae and hybrids thereof, except for domesticated and feral cats" and "canidae, except for domesticated dogs," would also be banned under the new proposal. Additionally, the bill allows the state to add other animals to the wild animal definition in the future.

"The goal is to provide a modicum of oversight for the breeding, selling and ownership of wild animals," Low said.

She said that this is a "significant problem" in Missouri, which has "no laws governing the proper care, registration, etc of wild animals." This lack of oversight has made Missouri the "go-to-state for purchasing large cats, just to name one example," she added.

Low said the bill is based on "ASPCA boilerplate legislation." The aspects of the bill that make "sure that wild animals are properly and responsibly cared for, and are tracked by local authorities for the benefit of public health and safety, will remain intact," she said.

The bill was read in the state's House January 28, 2008 for a second time. Its Senate companion bill, which would establish more comprehensive wild animal registry requirements, was referred to the Judiciary and Civil & Criminal Jurisprudence Committee Feb. 5.