

**REPLY BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE *FOR THE*
ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE
TO QUESTIONS ASKED PURSUANT TO RULE 14 OF THE
RULES OF PROCEDURE BY DEPUTY L. QUERPEL**

Preamble

On the 7th of August 2024, there was an article published in the Guernsey Press reporting that a python had apparently escaped from its home in the Vale. This caused absolute chaos and terror amongst residents of the parish and many are reported to have been so severely traumatised by the whole event, that despite the fact it was one of the hottest days of the year, chose to keep their windows and doors to their home tightly closed. It was also reported that some residents even went out searching for the snake. The four-foot-long python was eventually found behind a chest of drawers at the residence of its owner. So, bearing all of that in mind, I ask the following questions:

Question 1

Are there any specific regulations in place that seek to ensure the safety and the wellbeing of animals?

Answer

The Animal Welfare (Guernsey) Ordinance, 2012 provides protection to animals and for the large part the Ordinance defines an animal as any living vertebrate except humans. Snakes, which all have backbones, are therefore afforded protection under this Ordinance.

Question 2

Are there any specific regulations in place that seek to ensure the safety and wellbeing of others, should an animal that is considered to be 'dangerous', escape from its place of residence?

Answer

Guernsey has no standalone legislation relating to dangerous wild animals. The UK has the [Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976](#), but regarding snakes only some venomous species are designated as dangerous. No large constrictors are designated as dangerous under this legislation, but that does not mean that they are not dangerous. Any constricting snake that reaches an adult size of eight feet (2.44m) or more should be considered potentially dangerous.

Only five species of constricting snake grow to this size and have posed a threat to human life. These are:

- 1) Reticulation Python ((*Python reticulatus*))

- 2) Amethystine Python (*Morelia amethystina*)
- 3) Green Anaconda (*Eunectes murinus*)
- 4) Indian Python (*Python molurus*). The Burmese python (*P. m. bivittate*) is a subspecies of the Indian. Both Indian and Burmese Python are CITES* listed.
- 5) African Rock Python (*Python sebae*). CITES listed.

Only two of these, the Burmese and the Reticulated, are commonly found in the pet trade.

*The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

The Reticulated python can reach a maximum length of over 30 feet; the Burmese python can reach lengths up to 20 feet.

There are no reports that the common Boa Constrictor (*Boa constrictor*) has ever killed a human, but it can reach adult lengths near ten feet and can be difficult to handle.

Constricting snakes greater than eight feet should be securely accommodated and should be handled by at least two people at a time.

Question 3

If such regulations are in place, then can you please tell me how those regulations are monitored on a daily basis?

Answer

Concerning large constricting snakes there are currently no such regulations in place in Guernsey or indeed the UK. However, we do intend to licence the ownership of exotic species to ensure that their keepers meet their snake's welfare needs, which also provides an opportunity to put in place provisions to ensure that large snakes are kept securely and that appropriate insurance is held.

This is in accordance with the implementation of controls that we intend to place on owners of restricted breeds, type, or crossbreeds of dog.

Question 4

If an animal that is considered to be dangerous were to escape, and cause harm to others, or to the property of others, what would then happen to that animal and to the owner of that animal?

Answer

The fate of the animal that caused the damage or harm would depend upon the circumstances.

Assuming the Committee's proposals for a licensing regimen are supported, once it is in place the keeper could lose their licence to keep such animals. One requirement

of licensing would be that the keeper has in place third party liability insurance for any damage or harm that the animal causes. The victims of any damage or harm could raise a claim against the keeper for any damages incurred.

Question 5

Does the owner of a snake need a licence to own that snake?

Answer

Currently no, but should the Committee's proposals be supported, in future all owners of all exotic wild animals would require licences to keep them. Those who keep exotic dangerous wild animals would have additional licence conditions requiring them to keep the animals securely, have appropriate handling equipment, immediately report escape and to have in place insurance.

Date of Receipt of the Question: 18 August 2024

Date of Reply: 23 August 2024