



Oregon

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**To: The Honorable Ken Helm, Chair
House Agriculture, Land Use, and Water Committee**



**House Bill 4128
Bernadette Graham-Hudson, Wildlife Division Administrator
Dr. Colin Gillin, State Wildlife Veterinarian
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife**

Thank you for this opportunity to provide background relevant to House Bill 4128. HB 4128 directs the Department to consult with Legislative Policy and Research Office as they prepare a report concerning Oregon's current framework for preventing, monitoring and responding to zoonotic disease. The bill directs the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) to review and update the list of prohibited species as the Commission deems necessary to protect against significant risks to public health from zoonotic disease and requires the Commission to review and update relevant rules upon notification by Oregon Health Authority (OHA) that a wildlife species poses a significant risk to public health from zoonotic disease. Additionally, HB4128 authorizes the Commission to institute civil suit for recovery of damages for violation of rule related to list of prohibited species. The Department has no position on the bill as introduced.

The Department is given authority in ORS 496.012 to manage the states wildlife. ORS 497.308 prohibits the holding of any live wildlife unless specified in rule adopted by the Commission, and ORS 498.052 gives the Department authority to regulate the release or importation of domestically raised wildlife or non-native wildlife. The prevention and response to zoonotic disease risks is an embedded component of the Department's mission. The Commission has adopted detailed Oregon Administrative Rules (OARs) in Chapter 635 Division 44 for the holding of native wildlife and in Division 56 for the importation, holding and transportation of non-native wildlife.

There are very few native species that may be held in captivity. The OARs include three classifications for non-native species: Controlled, Non-controlled and Prohibited. Thousands of species worldwide are not classified in any of the three, and those are all prohibited by rule. The process required nearly four years of work with stakeholders and wildlife species experts to develop and finalize these species lists. The lists were developed specifically to protect Oregon's native wildlife from harmful diseases, genetic mixing and invasive competitors. Each of the lists has been adaptively amended over the last 25 years to address new threats to Oregon's wildlife and potential human health risks.

The Department manages disease risk to wildlife populations and potential impacts to humans by having a wildlife health program with veterinarians and support staff. The Department's wildlife health program coordinates field activities to prevent disease introduction by conducting surveillance through diagnostic testing of susceptible wildlife species. The Department's state wildlife veterinarian assists with development of policy, laws, and rules in Oregon as well as in collaboration with other states and international partners. The Department relies on our trained field biologists and enforcement personnel

to conduct inspections and enforce laws to abate illegal activities that could allow harmful species and disease introductions.

Most emerging infectious zoonotic diseases involve dynamic interactions among populations of wildlife, livestock, and people within rapidly changing environments. Many of the most serious zoonotic disease pathogens in Oregon originate in several groups of mammals, such as rabies in bats and sylvatic plague and many of the hemorrhagic viruses like Hantavirus that reside in rodent hosts. The Department has existing guidelines for handling these animals to prevent disease transfer from humans to wildlife and vice versa.

The Department relies on our agency partners for regulation of disease risk to humans; specifically, Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) as it relates to domesticated animals and exotic animals. All animals transported into the state are required under ODA rules to obtain a certificate of veterinary inspection through the authority of the State Veterinarian. Both ODA and the Department have integrated their administrative rules to provide a framework for protecting the state's domesticated animals and wildlife specifically from the incursion of economically devastating and population impactful diseases. Additionally, OHA has the role to protect human populations from disease outbreaks. Incidents of zoonotic disease such as West Nile Virus and Salmonella have required a close collaboration, especially if the disease is found to have transferred from wildlife and there is a threat to human health from exposure to wildlife. It is important to note that many of the zoonotic diseases of concern, especially those from outside the North American continent, are brought to this country by infected humans, not wildlife.

The Department appreciates that the bill prohibits sale of live wildlife for the purpose of human consumption, unless otherwise lawful as outlined in bill. The best measure to stop imports of non-native wildlife is federal action at ports and Oregon should closely partner with federal agencies in support of their port surveillance and inspection efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.

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