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News Release

FWC passes new rules to thwart illegal release of nonnative fish and wildlife

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The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) adopted new rules on Wednesday that will provide options for unpermitted owners of nonnative species if they can no longer keep their pet.

"Release of exotic animals by pet owners remains a significant pathway for the introduction of nonnative species," said the FWC's Scott Hardin. "As a result, the FWC initiated a series of pet amnesty events to provide an option for owners of exotic pets to surrender their unwanted pets to responsible agencies or individuals instead of illegally releasing them."

The FWC requires a captive wildlife permit to own many nonnative species, including Class II and III wildlife, venomous reptiles and the six species designated as reptiles of concern. The new rule allows, at FWC-sponsored amnesty events, owners of unpermitted fish and wildlife to surrender their animals, and for adopters to accept nonnative fish and wildlife from unpermitted individuals, without penalty. This addition is an exemption from the current rule that prohibits transfers of wildlife of any kind when permits are required.

The new rule also allows state and county animal control agencies to accept unpermitted nonnative animals, with the owners allowed to surrender those animals to the agencies without penalty.

The FWC has sponsored three amnesty day events. The next Pet Amnesty Day will be at the Jacksonville Zoo Nov. 22, and another one will be in Miami in early 2009.

The passage of the new rule will help prevent further releases of nonnative fish and wildlife into Florida's diverse and fragile environment.

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Our mission: Managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people.



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