



GUIDANCE NOTES ON ZOO LICENSING

Introduction

The Zoo Licensing Act 1981, which came into force on 30th April 1984, introduced a licensing system applicable to both existing and new zoos. A zoo is defined in the Act as being “an establishment where wild animals are kept for exhibition to which members of the public have access, with or without charge for admission, on more than seven days in any period of twelve consecutive months”. The Act does not extend to circuses or pet shops, both of which are covered by other legislation.

The wide scope of the definition given above means that licensed zoos can range from traditional urban zoos and safari parks to smaller collections such as specialist butterfly houses and aquaria, which are often in rural areas. This range of types of establishments is recognised within the legislation and dispensations can sometimes be granted for small zoos. These dispensations only reduce the number of inspectors to a reasonable level for a small establishment, and do not minimise in any way a zoo’s obligation to achieve the levels of animal welfare and public safety set out in the Secretary of State’s Standards of Modern Zoo Practice.

Procedure for Zoo Licence Applications

- (a) Applicants for a Zoo Licence must give two months notice of their intention to apply giving details of the proposed zoo. A notice must be published in one local and one national newspaper, and displayed on site. The notice must also be sent to the District Council in order for it to be available for public inspection at the Council Offices during normal office hours.
- (b) On receipt of the application, the Council will circulate the information to the following for comments:-
 - (i) District Ward Councillor for the proposed site;
 - (ii) The Chief Officer of Police;
 - (iii) The Chief Fire Officer;
 - (iv) The governing body of any national institution concerned with the operation of zoos (eg National Zoological Association);
 - (v) The Parish Council for the proposed site.
- (c) In addition to the above consultations, the Council will liaise with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on the possibility of any exemptions and joint inspections.
- (d) When the consultation and inspection process has been completed, consideration of whether a Zoo Licence can be granted or not will be possible. Any representations from interested parties will be taken into consideration and, if necessary, the application may be reported to the Council’s Licensing Committee for determination. In the event that the application is referred to the Licensing Committee, the applicant will be provided with all the necessary papers and invited to attend the meeting in order to present his/her proposals.

Additional Useful Information

Applicants for Zoo Licences may find it of benefit to obtain a copy of the following:-

- a) the Secretary of State's Standards of Modern Zoo Practice;
- b) Department of the Environment Circular 5/84;
- c) Department of the Environment Circular 11/88.

In addition, DEFRA's website has some up-to-date information on the review of the zoo licensing system that is currently taking place. The website address is: defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/index.htm. Their address is Zoo Licensing Branch, Global Wildlife Division, DEFRA, 1st Floor, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6EB (telephone number 0117 372 8209).

Any queries regarding zoo licensing or further information please contact:-

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