IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

November 2026 Commission Meeting ***Agenda Item No.:*** *5D*
Agenda Item: *Petition for Rulemaking: Amend Enclosure Requirements for Snakes* ***(Action)*** ***Supervisor Approval:*** *JF*
Presented by: *Amber Worthington*
Position/Title: *Deputy Director of Programs and Policy*

Background:
The Commission and the Department received the included petition for rulemaking on September 21, 2026 to modify the rules related to captive wildlife and amend the enclosure requirements, "to require that, for snake enclosures, the length be at least the length of the snake."

The Commission adopted rules for IDAPA chapter 13.01.10, Rules Governing Wildlife Importation, Possession, Release, Sale, or Salvage – for one of the Zero-Based Regulation phases - during their November 2022 Commission meeting. At that time, modifications concerning animals were made to section 261, Prevention of Escape of Captive Wildlife, but there were no revisions around reptiles.

The petitioner, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals Foundation, is asking for an amendment to 13.01.10 section 261, that will add provisions specific to snake enclosures to be of a size that allows for the full stretch of the snake's length, deemed to be "…one of their most fundamental physical and behavioral needs…"

The petition points out the Department's requirement of enclosures structured to make it impossible for animals to escape. It goes on to suggest that not only does captivity stress brought on by an ill-sized enclosure lead to a compromise of the snake's wellbeing and potential of human-directed aggression, it also can create an escape-driven response and possible escape.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:
Under Idaho Code 67-5230, any person may petition an agency requesting rulemaking. The agency must: deny the petition in writing, stating its reasons for denial, or initiate rulemaking. The Commission must act on the petition no later than its first regular meeting scheduled seven (7) or more days after submission of petition.

Public Involvement Process:
This petition was received as a written letter by the Commission Chairman and Director.

Justification:
Idaho Code 67-5230 requires the Commission to act on petitions for IDAPA rulemaking, either by initiation of rulemaking or by written petition denial.

Staff Recommendation:
Staff recommend proceeding with the negotiated rulemaking process.

Sample Motion #1:
I move the Department initiate negotiated rulemaking to consider amending IDAPA chapter 13.01.10.261 to modify enclosure requirements for snakes.

Sample Motion #2:
I move to deny the petitioner's request for rulemaking that would consider amending rule to modify enclosure requirements for snakes.

AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF ALL ANIMALS

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September 21, 2026

Via e-mail

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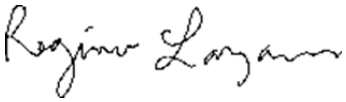
Re: Petition Requesting Rulemaking to Amend Chapter 10 to Require That Snake Enclosures Provide at Least Enough Space for Snakes to Fully Extend

Dear Commission Chairman Cheirrett:

Pursuant to the Idaho Administrative Procedure Act, Idaho Code Ann. § 67-5230, I am submitting the attached petition for rulemaking on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, Inc., and Constance J. Larsen-Witte, urging the Idaho Fish and Game Commission to amend the enclosure requirements, as described in Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261, to require that, for snake enclosures, the length be at least the length of the snake.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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ENTITIES:

- PETA U.S.
- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

Petition
Before the Idaho Fish and Game Commission

September 21, 2026

Requesting Rulemaking to Amend Chapter 10 to Require That Snake Enclosures Provide at Least Enough Space for Full Extension

Submitted on Behalf of

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Submitted by

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I. INTRODUCTION

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, Inc. (PETA) and Constance J. Larsen-Witte (collectively "Petitioners") submit this petition pursuant to the Idaho Administrative Procedure Act, Idaho Code Ann. § 67-5230, which provides that "[a]ny person may petition an agency requesting the adoption, amendment, or repeal of a rule."[1] The Petitioners request that the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG or "Department"), through the Idaho Fish and Game Commission ("Commission"), commence rulemaking proceedings to amend the enclosure requirements, as described in Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261 (Prevention of Escape of Captive Wildlife), applicable to captive wildlife facilities, to require that, for snake enclosures, the length be at least as long as the snake.[2] The Petitioners also propose minimum width and height dimensions as described in section V.

The Department requires that, for all animals, cages or enclosures must be of sufficient size to give the animal "ample space for exercise and to avoid being overcrowded." Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261(02). To give effect to that requirement, the Department adopted measurable enclosure dimension standards for facilities to follow and IDFG agents to enforce objectively. Yet, since the early 1990s, reptiles have remained the only category of captive wildlife excluded from specific enclosure-length requirements. *See* Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261(02)(a), 13.01.10.400(08)(c)(i) (2016) (effective July 1, 1993). The extensive scientific literature that has emerged in the decades since makes clear that this omission is no longer defensible. As the example below demonstrates, the absence of measurable enclosure standards for reptiles results in snakes being confined in enclosures that are too small to accommodate one of their most fundamental physical and behavioral needs: the ability to fully stretch out.

Earlier this year, PETA alerted the Department to a python being confined by a commercial wildlife facility in an enclosure measuring less than half the snake's length.[3] *See* Figure 1. The investigating officer noted in his report that "reptiles are exempt from IADPA enclosure size requirements" and took no action to enforce IDFG's general rule requiring an enclosure to be of "sufficient size." Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261(02); Ex. 1, at 4 (Case Report). While the general rule should provide all animals with meaningful protection and promote safety, it becomes a vague aspiration when applied to reptiles without supplemental enclosure-size specifications, doing little to safeguard captive snakes or the public.

[1] "Person" means "any individual, partnership, corporation, association, governmental subdivision or agency, or public or private organization or entity of any character." Idaho Code Ann. § 67-5201(21).

[2] "Captive wildlife facility" means a "[f]acility where the operator obtains, possesses, or propagates wildlife for any purpose, including commercial, rehabilitation, private ownership (including private park) or sale." Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.010(03). Subject to exceptions that are not relevant here, "wildlife" means "any form of animal life, native or exotic, generally living in a state of nature." Idaho Code Ann. § 36-202(g); Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.010.

[3] *See* Letter from Regina Lazarus, Senior Couns., PETA Found., to Justin Williams, Bureau Chief, IDFG (Jan. 21, 2026) (on file with PETA).



Figure 1. Python in a small enclosure at the Idaho Reptile Zoo on January 16, 2026.

As detailed herein, measurable enclosure standards are critical for snakes, as objective evidence-based research indicates that a snake's physical and behavioral welfare depends on having enough space to fully stretch. Enclosures that prevent full extension do not allow normal postural movement and increase the risk of injury. Moreover, inadequately sized enclosures subject snakes to captivity stress that can trigger defensive and escape behaviors that pose safety risks.

Accordingly, the Petitioners respectfully request that the Department amend its rule to include a clear and objectively enforceable minimum snake enclosure length standard that is at least the length of the snake.

All authorities cited in this petition are incorporated by reference; electronic/hard copies will be provided upon request.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PETITIONERS

PETA is a Virginia non-stock corporation and an animal-protection charity dedicated to protecting animals from neglect, abuse, and all forms of cruelty. PETA U.S. is the largest animal rights organization in the world. PETA entities have more than 10.4 million members and supporters globally, including over 26,000 in Idaho. PETA operates, in part, to promote and advance the principle that animals are not ours to abuse in any way and carries out its mission through public education, investigations, research, animal rescue, legislation, special events, celebrity involvement, protest campaigns, and other activities—including those related to reptiles.

In 2021, PETA persuaded Zoo Med Laboratories, a major reptile habitat supplier to large retailers (e.g., PetSmart, Amazon, and Walmart), to remove from its website misleading messaging that snakes may be held in an enclosure only half the length of their bodies.[4] Sparked

[4] *See* Rachel Showalter, *Central Coast Reptile Supplier Removes Snake-Care Guidance After PETA Lawsuit*, KCBX (June 21, 2021, 5:00 AM), https://www.kcbx.org/pets-animals/2021-06-21/central-coast-reptile-supplier-removes-snake-care-guidance-after-peta-lawsuit; *see generally* Complaint, PETA v. Zoo Med Lab'ys, No. 2020 CA 004123

by PETA's 2024 petition for rulemaking, the Colorado Department of Agriculture amended its regulations applicable to pet stores, breeders, animal rescues, and sanctuaries licensed under the Pet Animal Care and Facilities Act to require them to provide snakes enough space to fully extend.[5] In 2026, after PETA filed a lawsuit against reptile retailers Reptmart and Snakes at Sunset for making false and misleading claims and failing to provide relevant information on snake welfare,[6] both retailers settled the dispute and agreed to replace misinformation about snake care and snake enclosure size on their websites with accurate, evidence-based language.[7] Their websites now message that snakes require space to fully stretch.[8]

Constance J. Larsen-Witte is a resident of the State of Idaho, County of Ada. She holds a deeply rooted commitment to the humane, compassionate, and dignified treatment of animals, including animals kept in cages or otherwise confined. She believes that animals are entitled to protection from unnecessary suffering, neglect, and inhumane treatment, and that those who have custody or control of animals have a responsibility to ensure their basic welfare and humane treatment. Her concern for the welfare of animals is longstanding and sincere. For many years, she has supported PETA's work to prevent cruelty and promote the humane treatment and protection of animals. Her support for these efforts reflects her personal commitment to advocating for animals who cannot advocate for themselves and to ensuring that their welfare and humane treatment are given appropriate consideration.

III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261 is part of the IDFG's Chapter 10 "Rules Governing Importation, Possession, Release, Sale, or Salvage of Wildlife" administered by the IDFG under the authority of the Commission. *See* Idaho Code Ann. § 36-104(b)(6). This rule recognizes that humane treatment is part and parcel of containment and escape prevention management and requires that an enclosure "be of sufficient size" to give the confined animal "ample space for exercise and to avoid being overcrowded." Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261(02). For all animals, *except reptiles*, the Department translates this requirement into measurable standards by stipulating minimum cage or enclosure lengths. *See* Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261(02)(a). Minimum width requirements are set in relation to cage length. *Id.* 13.01.10.261(02)(b).

B (D.C. Super. Ct. Sept. 24, 2020), https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/PETA-v-Zoo-Med-Complaint.pdf.

[5] *See* 48 Colo. Reg. 754, 774 (June 2025) (describing 8 Colo. Code Regs. § 1202-15:12.11.15 (effective July 15, 2025)). The amended snake enclosure rule provides licensees until January 1, 2027, to comply with the enclosure length requirement, presumably because of the large number of snakes housed by some breeders.

[6] *See* Complaint, PETA v. MM Reptiles, Inc., No. 2025-CAB-005772 (D.C. Super. Ct., Aug. 28, 2025).

[7] *See* Notice of Voluntary Dismissal with Prejudice, PETA v. MM Reptiles, Inc., No. 2025-CAB-005772 (D.C. Super. Ct., Feb. 9, 2026); *First Snake Rights Victory! Retailers Pull Care Misinformation After PETA Lawsuit*, PETA (Feb. 10, 2026), https://www.peta.org/media/news-releases/first-snake-rights-victory-retailers-pull-care-misinformation-after-peta-lawsuit/.

[8] *See Responsible Care and Ownership*, REPTMART, https://reptmart.com/responsible-reptile-care-ownership/ (last visited Sept. 18, 2026); *Responsible Care and Ownership*, SNAKES AT SUNSET, https://snakesatsunset.com/responsible-care-and-ownership/ (last visited Sept. 18, 2026).

IV. ARGUMENT IN SUPPORT OF REQUESTED ACTION

Requiring Enclosures That Are at Least As Long As the Snake Is a Critical Baseline Requirement to Prevent Escape Behavior, Reduce Public Safety Risks Inherent in Inadequate Confinement, Promote Humane Conditions, and Accommodate Normal Behavior and Posturing.

The Petitioners urge the Department to amend the enclosure length requirements outlined in Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261(a), which, unlike for all other animals, lack specificity for reptiles, to require snake enclosures to be at least as long as the snake. This establishes a measurable benchmark, grounded in objective, evidence-based recommendations, that works in tandem with the rule's underlying goal—to ensure that enclosures "be of a sufficient size to give the animal or bird confined ample space for exercise and to avoid being overcrowded." Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261.

A. Inadequate Enclosure Space Drives Escape Behavior in Snakes and Increases Safety Risks for Humans.

The Department requires enclosures to be designed to prevent escapes. *See* Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261. But subjecting snakes to captivity stress—caused by enclosures that fail to accommodate rectilinear posturing—creates foreseeable safety risks to caretakers and the public, as well as compromises snake welfare. Human-directed aggression in snakes is "[o]ften related to fear/stress, defense, and escape behavior," and is "[c]ommon in overly restrictive and exposed (including excessive ambient light for nocturnal species), deficient and inappropriate environments."[9] In other words, the very conditions produced by inadequate enclosure standards—including insufficient space to fully stretch—are precisely those known to precipitate defensive and escape-driven responses.

Empirical evidence reinforces this connection. A field study on free-ranging cottonmouths found that "snakes with elevated levels of baseline [corticosterone ('CORT')] at first encounter were more likely to strike than exhibit a threat display when approached in the field."[10] The researchers concluded that "baseline CORT levels can be important correlates of defensive

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[9] Clifford Warwick et al., *Spatial Considerations for Captive Snakes*, 30 J. VETERINARY BEHAV. 37, 41 (2019), https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1558787818302211 [hereinafter *Spatial Considerations*].; *see also* Sneha Krishnan et al., *The Effect of Varied Enrichment Types on Snake Behavior*, 53 J. ZOO & WILDLIFE MED. 266, 267 (2022), https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35758568/ ("Captivity-related chronic stress behaviors are thought to include increased abnormal behavior, behavioral inhibition, vigilance behavior, excessive hiding, fearfulness, frequency of startle, aggression, reproductive behavior, dietary indiscretion, and behavioral complexity."); *see* Albert Martínez Silvestre, *How to Assess Stress in Reptiles*, 23 J. EXOTIC PET MED. 240, 241 (2014), https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1557506314000986 (listing aggression as a specific behavior parameter that indicates chronic stress).

[10] Mark W. Herr et al., *Stressed Snakes Strike First: Hormone Levels and Defensive Behavior in Free Ranging Cottonmouths (Agkistrodon piscivorus)*, 243 GEN. & COMPAR. ENDOCRINOLOGY 89, 89 (2016), https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016648016303641?via=ihub. CORT levels are "used as a direct proxy for the amount of stress an animal is experiencing." *Id.*

behavior" and that, if this relationship is causal, "environmental challenges that increase baseline stress levels of populations may elevate cottonmouth defensive behavior."[11] Thus, heightened stress does not merely affect physiological health; it may directly influence how snakes respond to perceived threats, shifting behavior toward more immediate and potentially dangerous defensive actions. This relationship has important consequences for animal-human interactions.

Accordingly, requiring that enclosures provide at least enough space for a snake to fully stretch aligns with the Department's objectives to prevent the escape of captive wildlife and promote safety, while, as explained below, also addressing animal welfare.

B. The Omission of Enclosure Dimension Requirements Puts Snake Welfare at Risk.

Spatially restrictive snake enclosures that do not accommodate straight-line body posturing fail to meet a basic requirement for snake health and welfare, as rectilinear body posturing is an essential component of snake biology.[12] Over forty problematic physical or behavioral conditions are causally linked to confining a snake in an overly restrictive enclosure.[13] These include, but are not limited to:

> 'interaction with transparent boundaries' (a behaviour where snakes push against a glass or plastic transparent barrier), hyperalertness (high levels of nervousness), flattened body posture, rapid body movement (jerky or jumpy), head hiding and co-occupant aggression[,] [v]arious illnesses and other issues include[ing] respiratory disease, rostral abrasions from suspected repeated attempts to escape, ventral contact dermatitis and bowel constipation.[14]

Researchers have found more objective scientific evidence establishing the need for snakes to be able to fully stretch in all enclosures than is available for dogs, cats, and birds, and note the absence of scientific data or related objective opinion to support keeping snakes in enclosures where they cannot fully extend.[15] Notwithstanding the scientific consensus that an enclosure must be at least 1 x snake length (SL), and the problematic health and welfare issues associated with enclosures that do not meet this minimum requirement, "[c]aptive snakes may be the only vertebrates where management policy commonly involves deprivation of the ability and probable welfare need to freely extend the body to its natural full length."[16]

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[11] *Id.*
[12] *See* Clifford Warwick et al., *Getting It Straight: Accommodating Rectilinear Behavior in Captive Snakes—A Review of Recommendations and Their Evidence Base*, 11 ANIMALS 4 (2021), https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/11/5/1459 [hereinafter *Getting It Straight*].
[13] *Spatial Considerations*, *supra* note 9, at 41–42.
[14] Jadan Hutchings & Matthew Crane, *Recent Scientific Insights into the Spatial Needs of Captive Snakes*, INT'L J. ZOOLOGY 2 (2025), https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1155/ijz/3548045; *see Spatial Considerations*, *supra* note 9, at 41–42.
[15] *See Getting It Straight*, *supra* note 12, at 16; Hutchings & Crane, *supra* note 14, at 5.
[16] *Spatial Considerations*, *supra* note 9, at 37.

In 2021, a group of nineteen prominent experts specializing in snake-related veterinary medicine, biology, animal welfare, and husbandry carried out a significant scientific investigation, which was subsequently published in a peer-reviewed academic journal.[17] One of the authors, Clifford Warwick, summarized the study and findings as follows:

> This major review meticulously analysed the available reports and guidance materials pertaining to recommended enclosure sizes for snakes. Of the peer-reviewed reports analysed, 25 recommended minimum enclosure sizes consistent with the 'one snake length' (1 x SL) principle or greater, and 6 recommended enclosure sizes of less than 1 x SL. Accordingly, the great majority of the scientific literature conformed with the 1 x SL enclosure principle as a minimum provision. Moreover, whilst all of the scientific literature recommending the 1 x SL principle as a minimum enclosure dimension could be traced back to peer-reviewed scientific evidence and material, none of the literature recommending less than 1 x SL enclosures originated from scientific work; instead, all of that material was derived from hearsay opinion.
>
> The recommendation from this major review and analysis (and many others) was that snakes should be able to fully stretch their bodies in all dimensions. The minimum stipulation that indicates 1 x SL as a single dimension should be interpreted as meaning that this constitutes an absolute minimum to allow a straight-line body posture: it does not indicate that one single dimension allowing straight-line posture is a true acceptable minimum in respect of accommodating true normal behaviour. In all other (non-snake) species it is correctly expected that the ability to adopt a stretched-out posture automatically infers in all dimensions. Regardless of the vast amount of evidence showing snakes need to fully stretch at will, there are no scientific or other reasons to conclude the contrary position.[18]

An article published in 2025 described how researchers with the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development Animal Welfare Unit—an entity whose role is to deliver evidence-based information to relevant industries—examined recent peer-reviewed literature comparing the welfare of snakes kept in smaller enclosures with those housed in larger enclosures that allow the snakes to fully stretch out and move freely.[19] The researchers found no

[17] *See generally Getting It Straight*, *supra* note 12.
[18] Letter from Clifford Warwick to Brandon J. DeCuir, Chairman, La. Wildlife & Fisheries Comm'n (Sept. 25, 2024) (on file with PETA).
[19] *See* Hutchings & Crane, *supra* note 14, at 5.

peer-reviewed literature recommending restrictive housing for captive snakes.[20] They concluded that "snake welfare is enhanced when the snake is given space to stretch out and explore."[21]

The following includes a sampling of peer-reviewed scientific research, some of which the 2021 publication cited and others that are more recent. Combined, the literature reviews, field and captive animal observations, and experiments present consistent findings that snakes need space to fully extend.

- B.M. Cargill et al., *A Survey Exploring the Impact of Housing and Husbandry on Pet Snake Welfare*, ANIMAL WELFARE 193, 193–208 (2022);
- Clifford Warwick, *Psychological and Behavioral Principles and Problems*, *in* HEALTH AND WELFARE OF CAPTIVE REPTILES 239, 267–68 (Clifford Warwick et al. eds., 2d ed. 2023), https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-86012-7;
- Clifford Warwick, *Reptilian Ethology in Captivity: Observations of Some Problems and Evaluation of Their Aetiology*, 26 APPLIED ANIMAL BEHAV. SCI. 3–4 (1990), https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/applied-animal-behaviour-science/vol/26/issue/1;
- Clifford Warwick & Catrina Steedman, *Naturalistic Versus Unnaturalistic Environments*, *in* HEALTH AND WELFARE OF CAPTIVE REPTILES 487, 487–508 (Clifford Warwick et al. eds., 2d ed. 2023);
- Clifford Warwick et al., *Assessing Reptile Welfare Using Behavioural Criteria*, 35 IN PRAC. 123, 234–31 (2013), https://bvajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1136/inp.f1197;
- Clifford Warwick et al., *Getting It Straight: Accommodating Rectilinear Behavior in Captive Snakes—A Review of Recommendations and Their Evidence Base*, 11 ANIMALS (2021);
- Clifford Warwick et al., *Reptile Expos: An Analysis and Recommendations for Control*, FRONTIERS ANIMAL SCI. 7 (2024), https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/animal-science/articles/10.3389/fanim.2024.1335982/full;
- Clifford Warwick et al., *Spatial Considerations for Captive Snakes*, 30 J. OF VETERINARY BEHAV. 37, 47 (2019);
- Dimple R. Waghela et al., *Ecology of Snakes in Captivity in Rajiv Gandhi Zoological Park, Katraj, Pune, Maharashtra*, 25 ASIAN J. ENV'T & ECOLOGY 199, 203 (2026), https://journalajee.com/index.php/AJEE/article/view/894/2077;
- Lance Jepson, *Inspecting Pet Shops*, 37 IN PRAC. 333, 343 (2015), https://bvajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1136/inp.h3396;
- Marisa S. Spain et al., *Effects of Habitat Modifications on Behavioral Indicators of Welfare for Madagascar Giant Hognose Snakes (Leioheterodon madagascariensis)*, 7 ANIMAL BEHAV. & COGNITION 70, 70–81 (2020), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338982217_Effects_of_Habitat_Modifications_on_Behavioral_Indicators_of_Welfare_for_Madagascar_Giant_Hognose_Snakes_Leioheterodon_madagascariensis;
- Mike Jessop et al., *Evidential Thresholds for Species Suitability in Captivity*, *in* HEALTH AND WELFARE OF CAPTIVE REPTILES 509, 514 (Clifford Warwick et al. eds., 2d ed. 2023);
- Neil D'Cruze et al., *Dropping the Ball? The Welfare of Ball Pythons Traded in the EU and North America*, 10 ANIMALS (2020), https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/10/3/413;

[20] *Id.*
[21] *Id.*

- *Opinion on the Space Requirements for Snakes in Vivaria Within Pet Selling Establishments*, ANIMAL WELFARE COMM. 16 (June 5, 2023), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/647dc7c35f7bb700127fa45c/AWC_opinion_space_snakes_vivaria_pet_selling_establishments.pdf;
- Phillip C. Arena & Clifford Warwick, *Spatial and Thermal Factors*, *in* HEALTH AND WELFARE OF CAPTIVE REPTILES 417, 425, 429–30 (Clifford Warwick et al. eds., 2d ed. 2023);
- Robert W. Mendyk & Clifford Warwick, *Arbitrary Husbandry Practices and Misconceptions*, *in* HEALTH AND WELFARE OF CAPTIVE REPTILES 561, 561–82 (Clifford Warwick et al. eds., 2d ed. 2023);
- John V. Rossi, *General Husbandry and Management*, *in* MADER'S REPTILE AND AMPHIBIAN MEDICINE AND SURGERY 109, 118–23 (2019), https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/B9780323482530000167;
- Stephen L. Barten & Gregory J. Fleming, *Current Herpetologic Husbandry and Products*, *in* CURRENT THERAPY IN REPTILE MED. & SURGERY 2, 2–12 (2014), https://veteriankey.com/current-herpetologic-husbandry-and-products/;
- Tina Hollandt et al., *Animal-Appropriate Housing of Ball Pythons (Python regius)—Behavior-Based Evaluation of Two Types of Housing Systems*, 16 PLOS ONE (2021), https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0247082.

Study after study has produced consistent findings that a captive snake's enclosure must be at least long enough to allow a snake to fully stretch, unobstructed by any object within the enclosure, to accommodate the snake's welfare. They should also be spacious enough to accommodate essential amenities such as heaters, basking areas, hiding spots, water pools, and vegetation without overcrowding. And, because many snake species "may reasonably be expected to move while adopting straight-line behaviour and manifest multiple activity habits (ie involve combinations of subterranean, aquatic, terrestrial, and arboreal patterns), increasingly authors are taking a precautionary view that all enclosures for all species ought to allow snakes to stretch and move in all dimensions."[22] To allow for the fundamental rectilinear behavior associated with locomotion and comfort, Warwick and others maintain that, as an absolute minimum containment condition, terrestrial snakes must receive space equivalent to the length of the snake (primary linear dimension); the other enclosure dimensions must not be less than forty percent of the primary linear dimension.[23] Arboreal snakes must receive space equivalent to the length of the snake in primary linear and vertical dimensions; the width dimension must not be less than 40% of the primary dimension.[24]

The objective advice within the scientific literature—that enclosures must provide snakes space to fully stretch—has been adopted in Colorado and by prominent veterinary organizations and retailers in the pet industry. Examples include:

[22] B.M. Cargill et al., *A Survey Exploring the Impact of Housing and Husbandry on Pet Snake Welfare*, ANIMAL WELFARE 193, 204 (2022).
[23] *Spatial Considerations*, *supra* note 9, at 46.
[24] *Id*.

- On May 15, 2025, the Colorado Department of Agriculture adopted amended regulations that expressly require pet stores, breeders, animal rescues, and sanctuaries licensed under the Pet Animal Care and Facilities Act to provide snakes enough space to extend fully.[25]

- The British Veterinary Association educates the public that the ball python "[n]eeds enough space to stretch out in full."[26]

- A publication by the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA)—an organization whose members include veterinarians who primarily care for snakes living in the homes of hobbyists—advises: "As a rule of thumb, the diagonal of the enclosure should, as a minimum, be approximate to the length of the snake. There should be enough space for the snake to display normal behaviour, move around freely, and the enclosure should be sturdy and escape-proof."[27]

- Petco—one of the largest pet supply companies in the United States—updated its reptile care sheets to recommend enclosures that allow snakes to stretch out fully.[28]

- In 2021, reptile supply company Zoo Med Laboratories removed the misleading guidance (i.e., that snakes may be held in an enclosure only half the length of their body) from its website.[29]

- In 2026, reptile retailer Reptmart updated its website to state: "Snakes require adequate space to stretch out the entire length of their bodies in all directions . . . ."[30] Likewise, Snakes at Sunset's updated website states: "Snakes must be able to fully stretch their bodies in all directions and move freely within their enclosure."[31]

In light of the extensive scientific consensus on snakes' spatial needs, the Department's continued omission of a minimum enclosure length requirement that ensures snakes can fully stretch out is both inappropriate and irresponsible. This omission invites subjective and inconsistent interpretation of the general requirement to provide an enclosure of "sufficient size" to give the snake "ample space for exercise and to avoid being overcrowded," and, as described above, results in a lack of enforcement. Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261(02).

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[25] *See* 48 Colo. Reg. 754, 774 (June 2025) (describing 8 Colo. Code Regs. § 1202-15:12.11.15 (effective July 15, 2025)).
[26] *Think Twice: Is This Pet Right for You?*, BRITISH VETERINARY ASS'N, https://www.bva.co.uk/take-action/our-policies/exotic-pets-non-traditional-companion-animals (last visited Sept. 18, 2026).
[27] *Pet Snakes in the UK – World Snake Day*, BSAVA (July 14, 2023), https://www.bsava.com/article/pet-snakes-in-the-uk-world-snake-day/.
[28] *Compare, e.g.*, *Corn Snake Care Sheet*, PETCO (Oct. 22, 2025), https://www.petco.com/content/content-hub/home/articlePages/caresheets/corn-snake.html#habitat-setup ("Since habitats should be large enough for an adult corn snake to stretch out fully, a 40-gallon breeder or larger tank is recommended.") *with Corn Snake Care Sheet*, PETCO (Mar. 2011), https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/24485850/corn-snake-care-sheet-petco ("size – appropriate size and shape habitat for an adult colubrid to accommodate normal behavior and exercise, at least a 40 breeder").
[29] *See* Showalter, *supra* note 4.
[30] *Responsible Care and Ownership*, REPTMART, *supra* note 8.
[31] *Responsible Care and Ownership*, SNAKES AT SUNSET, *supra* note 8.

C. Accreditation Guidance Recognizes the Importance of Space for Snakes to Fully Extend.

Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261 directs the Department to consider the standards or guidelines promulgated by accreditation entities as potential sources for identifying additional enclosure specifications. Although accreditation organizations have not published extensive, species-wide welfare standards addressing minimum enclosure dimensions for snakes, some guidance that exists recognizes the importance of providing enough space for snakes to fully extend.

The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), whose accredited institutions are expected to house animals in accordance with their biological and welfare needs, publishes Best Practice Guidelines and Welfare Standards for a variety of animals, including reptiles. In its 2025 Best Practice Guidelines for the Möllendorff's Ratsnake—the only snake-specific husbandry guideline published by EAZA—the association states that: "**Enclosures must be large enough to allow individuals to explore and extend the full length of their body** but small enough that they can be monitored safely without excessive disturbance."[32] This guidance reflects EAZA's recognition that the ability to fully stretch out is a basic consideration in snake husbandry and enclosure design.

A similar principle appears in guidance issued by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). The AZA's Animal Care Manual for the Eastern Massasauga states: **"Holding enclosures used to house massasaugas should be at least as long as the snake and half as wide**."[33]

Collectively, these examples in accreditation guidance and peer-reviewed scientific literature provide strong support for measurable enclosure standards that ensure snakes have enough space to fully extend.

[32] Charlie Frelon et al., *Reptile Taxon Advisory Group Best Practice Guideline for Möllendorff's Ratsnake* (*Elaphe moellendorffi*), EAZA 15 (2025), https://eazawebsite-prod.s3.nl-ams.scw.cloud/uploads/2025_Moellendorff_s_ratsnake_EAZA_Best_Approved_0a5c5ccffc.pdf (emphasis added).

[33] *Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake (Sistrurus catenatus catenatus) Care Manual*, AZA 10 (2013), https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2332/eastern_massasauga_rattlesnake_care_manual_2013.pdf (emphasis added).

V. PROPOSED RULE CHANGES

The Petitioners request that the Idaho Fish and Game Commission make the following changes to the Prevention of Escape of Captive Wildlife rule, Idaho Admin. Code r. 13.01.10.261, to add the underlined text as described below.

02. For all animals, cages or enclosures will be of sufficient size to give the animal or bird confined ample space for exercise and to avoid being overcrowded. (4-6-23)

> **f.** For snake enclosures, the minimum dimensions of enclosures shall be relative to the length of the body and tail, and
>
> **i.** for arboreal species, shall be at least the length of the snake on the longest side and in height, and shall not be less than forty percent (40%) of that length on the shortest side;
>
> **ii.** for terrestrial species, shall be at least the length of the snake on the longest side and shall not be less than forty percent (40%) of that length on the shortest side, and in height.

Exhibit 1

Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Case Report

Date of Incident	Case Number	County
01/16/2025 12:00	FG2026-E1142	Ada

People

Suspect

Name (First, Middle, Last)	Gender	Height	Weight	Date of Birth
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

Drivers License #	Drivers License State	Hair	Eyes	Age	Sales Record Phone
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

Address	City	State	Zip
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

Offenses & Charges

Warning
W32700000-11 - 4/20/2026 - [redacted]

Location of violation
IDAHO REPTILE ZOO

Offenses

Offense 1	IDAPA	Description
36-105(2)	13.01.10	Fail to follow Large Commercial Wildlife Facility permit conditions

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
N/A	Unknown	0

Comments
[redacted] moved the Idaho Reptile Zoo from [redacted] to [redacted]. He was told that he would need to renew his large commercial wildlife permit for the new location. [redacted] never renewed the permit and continued to operate and run the Idaho Reptile Zoo without a permit. [redacted] was warned.

Offense 2	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
Snake (other)	Unknown	0

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of 5 reticulated pythons. Reticulated pythons are a LACEY Act species and require a federal permit, as well as an IDFG import permit. [redacted] did not have any permits for the reticulated species. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Offense 3	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
Snake (other)	Unknown	0

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of 2 Burmese pythons. Burmese pythons are a LACEY Act species that require a federal permit, as well as an IDFG import permit (not a conventional house hold pet). [redacted] did not have any permits for the Burmese pythons. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Offense 4	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
Snake (other)	Unknown	0

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of 2 Green Anaconda's. Green Anaconda's are deleterious wildlife and a LACEY Act species that require a federal permit, as well as an IDFG import permit (not a conventional house hold pet). [redacted] did not have any permits for the Green Anacondas. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Offense 5	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
N/A	Unknown	0

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of 3 Galapagos Tortoise's that were sent to him from Florida. Galapagos Tortoises require an IDFG import permit (not a conventional house hold pet). [redacted] did not have any permits for the Galapagos Tortoise's. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Warning
W3270000-12 - 4/16/2026 - [redacted]

Location of violation
IDAHO REPTILE ZOO

Offenses

Offense 1	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
Alligator, Caiman, Crocodile	Unknown	7

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of 14 American Alligators. [redacted] has 7 American Alligators on his inventory from 2025. 7 American Alligators are new and have no permits associated. [redacted] admitted to purchasing and importing an albino alligator from Louisiana without a permit. [redacted] admitted to taking in 5 juvenile alligators as well from an Idaho resident, again, without a permit. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Offense 2	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
Snake (other)	Unknown	1

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of a Western Diamondback Rattlesnake. This is not a conventional house hold pet, nor a native reptile. [redacted] admitted to importing the Western Diamondback Rattlesnake from Arizona without a permit. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Offense 3	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
Snake (other)	Unknown	1

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of a Mexican West Coast Rattlesnake. Which is not a conventional house hold pet, nor a native reptile. M[redacted] admitted to importing the Mexican West Coast Rattlesnake from Arizona without a permit. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Offense 4	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
Snake (other)	Unknown	1

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of a Southern Pacific Rattlesnake. Which is not a conventional house hold pet, nor a native reptile. [redacted] admitted to importing the Southern Pacific Rattlesnake from Arizona without a permit. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Offense 5	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
Snake (other)	Unknown	1

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of a Albino Prairie Rattlesnake. Which is not a conventional house hold pet, although Prairie Rattlesnakes are native to Idaho, this albino Prairie Rattlesnake was not found in the wild and imported into the state. [redacted] admitted to importing the Albino Prairie Rattlesnake from Florida without a permit. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Warning
W3270000-13 - 5/27/2025 - [redacted]

Location of violation
IDAHO REPTILE ZOO

Offenses

Offense 1	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
Alligator, Caiman, Crocodile	Unknown	1

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of a Morelet's Crocodile. Which is not a conventional house hold pet, nor a native reptile. [redacted] admitted to importing the Morelets Crocodile from Florida without a permit. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Offense 2	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
Alligator, Caiman, Crocodile	Unknown	1

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of a Morelet's Crocodile. Which is not a conventional house hold pet, nor a native reptile. [redacted] admitted to importing the Morelets Crocodile from Florida without a permit. [redacted] was educated and warned. [redacted] also exported the Morelet's Crocodile to Florida without a permit. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Warning
W3270000-14 - 8/22/2025 - [redacted]

Location of violation
IDAHO REPTILE ZOO

Offenses

Offense 1	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
Snake (other)	Unknown	2

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of 2 Gaboon Vipers. Which is not a conventional house hold pet, nor a native reptile. [redacted] admitted to importing the Gaboon Vipers from Florida without a permit. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Offense 2	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
Snake (other)	Unknown	2

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of 2 Gaboon Vipers. Which is not a conventional house hold pet, nor a native reptile. [redacted] admitted to exporting the Gaboon Vipers to Florida without a permit. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Warning
W3270000-15 - 1/16/2025 - [redacted]

Location of violation
IDAHO REPTILE ZOO

Offenses

Offense 1	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
Alligator, Caiman, Crocodile	N/A	1

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of a Broad Snout Camian. Which is not a conventional house hold pet, nor a native reptile. [redacted] admitted to importing the Broad Snout Camian from Florida without a permit. [redacted] was educated and warned.

Offense 2	IDAPA	Description
36-701(d)	N/A	Import/Export/Release wildlife without permit.

Species	Sex	Unlawful Animal Quantity
N/A	Unknown	0

Comments
[redacted] was in possession of a Desert Tortoise. Which is not a conventional house hold pet, nor a native reptile - and is on the (Federal) Endangered Species List (Threatened) requiring permits for possession. [redacted] admitted to possessing the Desert Tortoise without a permit. [redacted] claimed the Desert Tortoise died during his facility move (brought out of hibernation too early). [redacted] was educated and warned.

Case Narratives

Case Narrative (Philip Stamer)

April 2026 - Ada County, ID.

Over the last several years IDFG has received complaints, tips, etc. regarding the Idaho Reptile Zoo run by Tyler [redacted]. Many complaints have been about animal husbandry or types of animals being held in captivity. I SCO Stamer investigated these claims through social media, and in person visits in plain clothes to document the condition and type of animals being kept.

I first visited the Idaho Reptile Zoo at their previous location [redacted] - Boise on September 9th, 2024. [redacted] and the Idaho Reptile Zoo moved locations to [redacted] in the Fall of 2025. During this time [redacted] visited with IDFG staff regarding the move and his requirement to update his large commercial wildlife facility for his new location. I visited the new location on February 7th, 2026 and April 11th, 2026.

During my visits/ investigation I found that [redacted] was in possession of the follow animals without proper federal permits or IDFG import/ export permits:

Green Anaconda - 2 (Imported from Oregon and Utah/ Listed Federally as deleterious wildlife/ Lacey act species)
Morelet's Crocodile - 1 (Imported from Florida)
Galapagos Tortoise - 3 (Imported from Florida Exported Back to Florida)
Gaboon Viper - 2 (Imported from Florida and Exported back to Florida)
American Alligator - 7 (Imported Albino from Louisiana, others taken in from Idaho resident without permit)
Broad Snout Caiman - 1 (Imported from Florida)
Southern Pacific Rattlesnake - 1 (Imported from Arizona)
Mexican West Coast Rattlesnake - 1 (Imported from Arizona)
Western Diamondback Rattlesnake - 1 (Imported from Arizona)
Prairie Rattlesnake (Albino) **- 1** (Imported from Florida)
Desert Tortoise - 1 (Imported from unknown without permit)
Reticulated Python - 5 (Imported from unknown - Lacey Act Species requiring federal permit)
Burmese Python - 2 (imported from unknown - Lacey Act Species requiring federal permit)

That is a total of **28** animals that require a permit. [redacted] did not get a single permit to possess/ import or export any of those animals. Additionally, [redacted] was operating his new location for months without updating his Large Commercial wildlife permit.

On April 13th, 2026, RCO Brian Jack, IDFG biologist Ryan Walrath and I arranged to meet with [redacted] and do a site visit. We arrived at the Idaho Reptile Zoo and discussed the violations and what is required by [redacted] to obtain his new Large Commercial Wildlife Facility Permit. [redacted] admitted he had imported/exported and possessed animals without permits as well as admit to not renewing his new Large Commercial Wildlife Facility Permit.

A warning was issued for each species of animal possessed/ imported without a permit as well as exported without a permit. Additionally, [redacted] was given a warning for operating a Large Commercial Wildlife Facility without a permit, and given a formal letter from IDFG stating that he must get a Large Commercial Wildlife Facility Permit within 30 days.

During my visits, I did not observe any issues with animal husbandry - reptiles are exempt from IDAPA enclosure size requirements. However, during our interview, [redacted] admitted many animals had perished during the move of zoo locations claiming *they came out of brumation too soon*. [redacted] also claimed to have euthanized several Argentine Tegu's do to his inability to continue to care for them.

Lastly, [redacted] has IDFG violation history regarding the possession and import of animals without an IDFG permit. With new guidance, it was decided that each of of the new violations would be documented with warnings and a formal education would occur with [redacted]. Moving forward [redacted] is expected to get proper permits and keep up with his Large Commercial Wildlife Facility Permit.

END OF REPORT.

Officers

Officer/Party top		
Name Stamer, Philip	Title Senior CO	Email Philip.Stamer@idfg.idaho.gov
Address 15950 N. Gate Blvd., Nampa ID 83687		Phone 208-465-8465
Comments None		

Approved By: Ben Cadwallader