



ATCHISON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Jack Laurie



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Ref: SB 269

Senator Kerschen, Chairman
Senate Ag Committee
300 SW 10th Avenue
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Committee,

In May, 2013, the Atchison County Sheriff's Office was faced with a dangerous situation that neither we nor any other law enforcement agency in the State of Kansas were prepared to handle. Numerous privately owned wild and exotic animals were abandoned in our county and we had no choice but to seize the animals. The animals involved in this incident were skunks, bobcats, lynx, servals, cougars, and a tiger. Of the eleven animals the two cougars and the tiger were the three we were very concerned with.

The Atchison County Sheriff's Office became involved when it was reported the owner had somewhat abandoned the animals. After responding to the location we became very concerned not only as the Sheriff but as a citizen of Atchison County. The cages containing the cougars and the adult tiger were less than 150 yards from a highly traveled road. They were constructed with mismatched chain-link panels held together by hose clamps, no locks to secure the doors, no exterior cages to prevent escapes, and only a dog chain used to "secure" the 400lbs tiger. These cages were not in compliance of the USDA regulations and with the owner did not have current USDA permits. As a lifelong dog owner and former K-9 Officer, I would not have trusted these cages to house a dog, let alone cougars or 400lb tiger.

While these animals are already banned in the Dangerous Regulated Animal Act, primates and wolves are not. We see no difference to the threat of public safety when it comes to wolves and non-human primates. No training is offered to law enforcement to handle these types of animals. It was hazardous to my staff and community where I was ultimately the one responsible for solving the problem. We do not have the appropriate protective gear to remove primates nor do we have an animal control officer trained to handle these animals. In our case, the true cost of moving these animals out of our community was well over \$40,000 and could have been detrimental to the budget of the Atchison County Sheriff's Office, if these costs were not covered by private agencies.

I urge the committee to support Senate Bill 269. This bill will ensure that species such as chimpanzees, monkeys, and wolves will only be in the hands of qualified, responsible, and knowledgeable facilities. If these laws are not strengthened, we (Kansans) are the ones stuck with the expensive costs associated to handling these situations and I am forced to subject my deputies to a dangerous encounter without proper training or equipment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack Laurie".

Jack Laurie, Sheriff