

Traveling Zoos

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Issue

Does the state of Connecticut license or otherwise regulate traveling zoos?

The Office of Legislative Research is not authorized to provide legal opinions and this report should not be considered one.

Summary

The state of Connecticut does not license traveling zoos. State law authorizes municipalities to license and regulate exhibitions, amusements, and performances ([CGS § 7-148\(c\)\(7\)\(H\)\(vii\)](#)). It is unclear whether this includes the authority to license and regulate traveling zoos. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) licenses animal exhibitors, including those that operate roadside and traveling zoos.

While the state does not license traveling zoos, state law and Department of Agriculture (DoAg) regulations mandate standards to control rabies in public settings involving the exhibition of animals. In general, under the regulations, all animals and poultry entered at fairs or shows must (1) be in good health and (2) have proof of rabies vaccination, where applicable.

For more information about Connecticut fair and show requirements, see this [document](#) from DoAg's Bureau of Regulatory Services. For information about the USDA licensing of animal exhibitors, see these resources: [website](#), [factsheet](#), and [guidelines](#).

USDA Licensing of Animal Exhibitors

With certain exceptions, people and businesses who publicly exhibit animals must obtain a license from the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Licensed exhibitors include those who operate roadside zoos. APHIS ensures that exhibitors comply with the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

AWA exempts certain animal exhibitors from regulation, including those who operate farm exhibits and state and local fairs. According to APHIS, state and local laws and ordinances typically regulate these entities.

AWA requires licensed exhibitors to provide their animals with adequate care and treatment. Among other things, it sets standards for housing, handling, transporting, sanitation, nutrition, and veterinarian care.

Connecticut Standards to Control Rabies in Public Settings

DoAg has adopted [regulations](#) on the control of rabies in public settings, including fairs, exhibits, and petting zoos ([Conn. Agencies Regs. §§ 22-359-1 to 5](#)). The department's authority to do so comes from state statute ([CGS § 22-359\(e\) & \(f\)](#)). The regulations include the following stipulations:

- No animal for which there is a licensed rabies vaccine may be in a public setting unless it is currently vaccinated for rabies. With respect to livestock, available rabies vaccines are licensed for use in cattle, sheep, and horses, but not for other species, including goats. DoAg recommends owners consult their veterinarian for rabies vaccination recommendations.
- For animals not currently vaccinated and in a controlled public setting, the owner or handler must keep written records that include contact information for everyone having direct physical contact with the animals, including their names, addresses, and telephone numbers and the date of contact. Records must be kept for at least six months and be made available to the DoAg commissioner upon request.
- Animals not currently vaccinated and in an uncontrolled public setting (e.g., where people coming into contact with the animals cannot be identified) must be kept separate from the public to avoid direct contact between people and the animals. Barriers such as a double fence or plexiglas must be used or a conspicuous sign must be posted stating:
"CONNECTICUT RABIES ADVISORY NOTICE – DO NOT FEED OR TOUCH THE ANIMALS."

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