

ATTN: Members Of The Licensing And Standards Committee

RE: # LS15.2 | Licensing and Standards Committee consideration on Nov. 30, 2016

Since 2011, Hands on Exotics (an exotic animal shelter based out of Toronto) has been rehabilitating rescue animals while providing outreach and educational programs across Ontario. We are regularly inspected by CAZA as well as the OSPCA to ensure that our animals are properly cared for; we have always met or exceeded their requirements while complying with any recommendations they provide. Additionally, we have a clean history of operating without any incidents or infractions.

Currently, Hands on Exotics outreach programs include pet therapy at nearly 300 nursing/retirement homes, autism groups, and other special needs groups. We also offer a variety of education programs at local schools, libraries, and private events like fairs, and festivals.

The majority of animals at our shelter started out as pets living in private homes until their owners could no longer care for them adequately; others were seized by the OSPCA or animal services because they were not being kept legally or safely.

If the proposed amendments are passed, Hands on Exotics will lose the only two exceptions that currently permit it to shelter its animals and conduct its outreach programs, with no procedure for us to regain permission until new criteria are developed in 2017. This would mean that the work that Hands on Exotics provides throughout the community would come to an end.

For this reason we ask that you add the premises of Hands on Exotics, and all places where it conducts its educational programs, to the listed exceptions (similar to Ripley's Aquarium), and take the opportunity to learn more about our organization as you develop the new criteria over the coming months.

Hands on Exotics' services are invaluable to members of our community and we hope you can help ensure that our services continue.

Sincerely,

Seth Falk / Owner, Hands on Exotics
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WHO WE ARE

Hands on Exotics is an animal shelter based out of Toronto, Ontario which specializes in the care of exotic animals (i.e. animals other than cats and dogs).

To fund the care for these animals Hands on Exotics offers a wide range of outreach programs. The animal assisted therapy program at Hands on Exotics currently visits nearly 300 nursing homes, retirement homes, autism groups, blind-and-deaf groups, and other special needs groups annually!

Educational programs are also available for schools, community centres, childcare organizations, libraries, and private events like birthday parties, fairs, and festivals.

Hands on Exotics does not currently receive public funding. The care of our animals is funded entirely by the use of these services.

Hands on Exotics is not open to the public, does not charge admission, or run any programs on-site. Our shelter is only used for the housing and care of our animals.





WHAT WE DO

We aim to create and promote a positive relationship between people and non-human animals in the following ways:

- We adopt, rescue, or re-home animals whenever we are able to.
- We give our animals the best care possible, meeting and exceeding CAZA standards, and providing them with copious amounts of enrichment.
- We facilitate positive, fun, hands-on interactions at presentations all over the GTA.
- We believe that the chance to touch and see animals up close, whether at a school, birthday party, or nursing home, can give people a deeper respect and appreciation for animals than seeing them in a caged, zoo setting.
- We focus heavily on teaching people about responsible animal husbandry. Exotic animals are often obtained as pets without enough knowledge or appreciation of their required care. Giving people this appreciation is one of the biggest and most tangible ways we can help exotic animals.
- While we are a very small organization and do not have the facilities to run large conservation projects like breeding programs on endangered animals, we do teach about the conservation status of each animal, and the effect of humans on their welfare in the wild, be it from the pet trade or from habitat destruction at any possible opportunity.
- The relationship between humans and animals can have a strong therapeutic effect which we bring to many nursing homes, hospitals, and special needs groups throughout the province.



“Animal-assisted activities are defined as a form of therapy that involves animals visiting people for motivational and recreational benefits to enhance quality of life. This therapy has been shown to positively enhance the quality of life and well-being and decrease levels of depression among the elderly. Additionally, it has been noted to have a positive impact on health factors among patients in hospital settings, including decreasing pain and hyperactivity and reducing blood pressure.”

A. Fine | Encyclopedia of Psychotherapy (2002)

ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY

This is where Hands on Exotics started and it remains a huge passion for us. Hands on Exotics currently visits about 300 nursing homes, hospitals, adult day programs, autism and special needs groups, and other similar facilities on a regular basis. Most of these programs end up booking us for regular visits.

- Animals that are part of our therapy programs have been screened for temperament to ensure they are appropriate candidates
- Our staff are trained in the safe handling of the animals to ensure the safety of participants
- We are accredited by the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums and all of our animals that require vaccinations get those on a regular basis, as well as fecal tests.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Listen to what members of our community have to say about their experience with Hands on Exotics:

"On Wednesday Natalie came to my sons school and she was amazing! All of the children loved it and my son Ryan was so thrilled! A huge thank you for doing what you do and providing a home for these animals! Thank you."

Heather M

"Our Cub/Beaver night with Hands On was fantastic!! Seth was so informative and so much fun. He organised our fairly big group in such a way that he could walk around and allow each participant to have a chance to pet the animals. The animals all looked very well-loved and were at ease with Seth. I liked how he talked to the kids about being responsible pet owners, and how some animals don't make good pets. I will definitely spread the word about your fantastic company!!!"

Kari M

"Great, educational presentation! The kids were engaged and I also appreciated the discussion around how difficult it is to care for some of the animals, and the commitment level needed. Would definitely rebook! :-)"

Andrea C

"The party was for my son's 8th birthday. He has autism and an incredible love of animals. The handlers were very informative about all of the animals and very patient with all of the children's questions. They made it such a fabulous experience for him and our entire family. Thank you so much from the bottom of our hearts:)"

Stacey B

"It was really enjoyable to meet such an interesting range of healthy and well-kept animals and also nice to know that not all animals are available on demand.... that their interests are put first. I learned a number of things about them that I didn't know. The kids were very excited to meet Willow especially. The presenters were very good.....flexible, adaptable, fun and friendly and very knowledgeable about the animals."

Robin D

"I love that you are a shelter for the animals; one parent told me that they had had another animal service at a party and they were not nearly as respectful and educational."

Stephanie R

