



## GUIDANCE FOR ENFORCEMENT OF THE BIG CAT PUBLIC SAFETY ACT

With the passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA) in December 2022, it became illegal for exhibitors to allow the public within 15 feet of a big cat unless the cat is behind a “permanent” enclosure. It also became illegal to own a big cat without having a USDA Class C exhibitor license unless the owner registered the animals with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) by June 18, 2023, or the owner fits into one of a few very narrow other exemptions, like qualifying as a sanctuary.

### WE ARE ASKING FOR YOUR HELP IN REPORTING VIOLATIONS TO FWS. THE THREE MOST COMMON VIOLATIONS OF THE LAW ARE:

#### #1 ALLOWING PUBLIC CONTACT.

While roadside zoos publicly advertising and offering cub petting for a fee has stopped, we still identified one case where this was permitted. We are ready to report what we hear to help FWS enforce the ban on contact, as it could discourage occasional behind-the-scenes activity because of the high risk.

#### #2 OWNING CATS WITHOUT A USDA LICENSE AND WITHOUT REGISTERING WITH FWS BY JUNE 18, 2023.

Unless an owner (1) has a USDA exhibitor’s license, (2) is a sanctuary according to the definition in the law, or (3) fits into a few other very narrow exemptions, owners were required to register their existing cats with FWS by June 18, 2023, and are not allowed to breed or acquire more. There is no remedy for failing to register, and unregistered owners who do not fit into one of the exemptions will have their cats confiscated. The tiger found in Texas in August during an animal cruelty investigation that fit into this category was confiscated and is now at a sanctuary.

Based on a Freedom of Information Act request to FWS, it appears that 27 owners registered a total of 80 cats by the June 2023 deadline. While no one knows how many private owners there are, it appears there are many who remain unregistered. This allows us to remove these cats from inhumane backyard conditions and moved to sanctuaries. The key is finding them and reporting them to FWS.

#### #3 FAILURE TO KEEP THE PUBLIC 15 FEET FROM CATS WHEN NOT BEHIND A PERMANENT BARRIER.

This requirement is how the law prohibits public contact in #1 and applies to traveling circus acts erecting temporary cages to perform. For instance, we reported one traveling circus act that performs at fairs, charging the public to feed a tiger with a six-foot stick. The barrier the public was behind was only about six feet away, a clear violation of the law.

### IF YOU BECOME AWARE OF THESE SITUATIONS AND WOULD LIKE ASSISTANCE REPORTING IT DIRECTLY TO THE PROPER INDIVIDUAL AT FWS, PLEASE CONTACT:

**HOWARD BASKIN WITH BIG CAT RESCUE AT [HOWARD.BASKIN@BIGCATRESCUE.ORG](mailto:HOWARD.BASKIN@BIGCATRESCUE.ORG)**  
**OR**  
**SHELBY BOBOSKY WITH THLN AT [SHELBY@THLN.ORG](mailto:SHELBY@THLN.ORG).**

### CONNECT WITH US:



[www.THLN.org](http://www.THLN.org)



[FB.com/THLNTX](https://www.facebook.com/THLNTX)



[@THLNTX](https://twitter.com/THLNTX)

*Legislative advertising paid for by the Texas Humane Legislation Network, PO Box 685283, Austin, TX 78768*