



**Good Nature Consulting**  
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March 5th, 2016  
Kansas House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee  
Re: SB 97  
Dear Representatives,

As the founder of Good Nature Consulting, a small business that specializes in matters of animal welfare, I have 10 years of experience working on issues involving captive wild animals, among other issues, and have extensively researched the suitability of particular species of animals as suitable pets or companion animals during this time. I also have a background as a zookeeper, shelter worker and an academic focusing my studies on human-animal interactions as an undergrad and later on International Animal Welfare, Ethics and Law as a graduate student. I am not receiving any compensation for my testimony and have several points I would like to make regarding SB 97. They are as follows:

1. **Clouded Leopards are not suitable pets due to compromised welfare and potential public safety risks.**  
The following statements indicate the unsuitability of these animals as pets. If accredited conservation programs and zoological institutions struggle to maintain good welfare, then private owners not equipped to ensure their welfare either.

Clouded leopards are generally regarded as “**secretive and easily stressed**” by conservation scientists working on breeding programs. (1)

They have also been described as “**shy, secretive, and nervous, often being slow to adapt to changes in their environment.**” by zoo management. (1)

They are **susceptible to stereotypic behaviors, specifically hair plucking, which is indicative of high stress levels, particularly when on display or upon having their cubs removed.** (2,3)

According to researchers Neil D’Cruze and David Macdonald “These cats are **extremely susceptible to stress, which can lead them to pluck their fur, chew their tails. Captive males, in particular, can become unnaturally aggressive.**” (4)

2. **Large cats are not suitable as pets.** Two scientific assessment frameworks indicate they are not suitable due to the risk to public safety and the difficulty of maintaining good welfare. (5,6)

According to the framework, clouded leopards and other wild cat species, fall into category e which is as follows: “Category E consists of species that are judged unsuitable as companion animals for any of a variety of reasons. Animals judged to fall into this category may include: i) **dangerous species such as venomous snakes and large cat species**; ii) **exotic species that could cause ecological damage if they escaped**; iii) wild species whose capture or transportation raises humane or environmental concerns; iv) long-lived species whose lifespan is likely to exceed an owner’s ability to provide care; and v) **species whose requirements (eg for normal social behaviour) cannot reasonably be met in captivity**” (5)

Using another framework for assessing the suitability of a particular species as a pet, it was also found that large cats (even smaller large cats) were some of the least suitable to be kept as pets. (6)

**Both assessments included questions on welfare of the species in consideration AND public safety, among other criteria.**

3. A note on public safety.

**Here in Kansas we have had a death occur of a teenage girl during a photo shoot due to the very type of irresponsible big cat private ownership that this bill is attempting to allow.**

As a shelter worker in the past, I have witnessed domestic **cat bites that sent a young child to the hospital from deep puncture wounds to her face** and I also received a **cat bite** on my right hand that **resulted in weeks of treatment**. This was from a domestic cat in a frightening environment. **If these cats had been 30, 40 or 500 pounds, the injuries would have been much more extensive and possibly fatal.**

During my work as the Captive Wild Animal Protection Coordinator for the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, I placed hundreds of exotic animals that had once been pets in private homes. **The majority of them were in need of sanctuary due to the owner's inability to meet their needs or aggressive behavior or the concern of their size as a danger to family members or neighbors.** This included big cats.

When someone decides their dog is too much for them to handle, there are educational resources or local shelters that can assist in a better placement (Though they are often stretched to their limits.). When someone decides their bobcat is too much to handle, then what? There is no happy ending. At best the cat will be lucky enough to find placement in an accredited sanctuary and spend the rest of his life in a cage. At worst, the cat will meet an early death or be kept in substandard living conditions for years until it escapes or dies. Photo ops or public encounters with exotic animals are money making schemes that do not fully consider the welfare of the animal or the safety of the public.

Sincerely,

Amber Barnes  
Good Nature Consulting

#### **Cited Works**

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3. Wielebnowski, N., Fletchall, N., Carlstead, K., Busso, J.M., Brown, J.L. 2002. Non-invasive assessment of adrenal activity associated with husbandry and behavioral factors in the North American clouded leopard population. *Zoo Biol.* 21 (In Press).
4. D'Cruze, N., & Macdonald, D. W. (2015). Clouded in mystery: the global trade in clouded leopards. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 24(14), 3505-3526.
5. Schupplit, C. A., and D. Fraser. "AFRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING THE SUITABILITY OF DIFFERENT SPECIES ASCOMPANION ANIMALS." *Animal Welfare* 9 (2000): 359-372.
6. Warwick, Clifford, Catrina Steedman, Mike Jessop, Elaine Toland, and Samantha Lindley. "Assigning degrees of ease or difficulty for pet animal maintenance: the EMODE system concept." *Journal of agricultural and environmental ethics* 27, no. 1 (2014): 87-101.