



February 4, 2015

TO: Senate Natural Resources Committee
Sen. Larry Powell, Chairman
FROM: Jim Fouts, Owner/Director, Tanganyika Wildlife Park
RE: Support for S.B. 97

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am Jim Fouts, Owner/Director of Tanganyika Wildlife Park in Goddard, Kansas. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of S.B. 97.

I have 42 years of experience working in the zoo industry starting as an animal keeper in 1972. In 1978 I began supplying birds and animals to zoos worldwide from our facilities in Africa and elsewhere, a practice that continues today. We have had a private collection of animals at our location in Goddard since 1985 and have used the same facility as a holding facility for our import activities. Tanganyika Wildlife Park was opened to the public in 2008 and grew out of our passion for wildlife and wildlife conservation.

Tanganyika Wildlife Park is a private, family owned and operated zoo and is home to over 400 birds, animals, and reptiles. We specialize in rare and endangered species ranging from black-footed penguins to Indian rhinoceros, and from critically endangered Amur leopard to cheetahs. Tanganyika is the most interactive zoo in Kansas when considering our animal ambassador programs and interactive stations. Tanganyika is one of the largest attractions in Kansas having more than 104,000 visitors. We are accredited by the Zoological Association of America.

S.B. 97 amends the dangerous animal statutes (KSA 32-1301). Our Park requested the statute change in order give accredited Kansas zoos the same freedom experienced by other zoos across the nation. Zoo including San Diego, Columbus, Nashville, Dallas, and Miami just to name a few use cats for educational interactive experiences. While we support the prohibition of public contact with adult big cats, the current statute as we explained to our legislators, prevents any degree of interaction with these cats, even kittens in their first few months of life.

Under controlled situations, our Park would once again like to offer visitors a safe, supervised up close and personal experience with these cats while they are small. The

1037 S 183rd St W
Goddard, KS 67052

jimfouts@twpark.com

Phone: (316) 794-8954

proposed language in the bill adds direct language from the Zoological Association of America's safe handling standards for interaction with these animals while also addressing animal welfare concerns.

The additional change we request is the removal of cheetahs and clouded leopards from the dangerous animal list. The original language passed by the legislature in 2006 lumped all big cats together under one category. Clouded leopards are frequently referred to as small cats. Adult clouded leopards are usually smaller than several unregulated cats such as bobcats and lynx and have an excellent disposition. Tanganyika has more clouded leopards than any zoo in the world and has been a positive force in the conservation of this species.

We request the removal of cheetahs from the list as they too have been unfairly grouped with big cats. Cheetahs, known for their speed, are actually used as ambassador animals by zoos far more often than any other cat species. Cheetahs have more in common with dogs than cats and are frequently raised with Labrador retrievers.

We have used ambassador cats at our facility since the late eighties. I cannot tell you how many times, myself and my family, have been reminded by a visitor to Tanganyika of a time 20 or more years ago when they were able to experience one of our ambassador cats and how it impacted their lives in a positive way.

We need to be able to do it again.

On behalf of Tanganyika and our future visitors, we appreciate your support of these changes and I will now yield for questions.

Jim Fouts
Director