

LEGAL STATUS

FEDERAL: There are no federal laws prohibiting the trade in or keeping of nonhuman primates as pets, except for a ban on their importation from outside the country for the pet trade. Primates used in research, at dealers, and at exhibitors are provided some protection via the Animal Welfare Act, but this does not extend to those in private homes.

STATE: See table. Twelve states allow primates to be kept as pets, with few restrictions. Eight require some form of license. Twenty-six states have bans on keeping primates as pets. The remaining states allow some primate species and ban others, or require licenses for some and not others. Even states that have enacted bans typically allow people to keep primates that were in their possession before the bans took effect. With lifespans of over 30 years, it is likely that many monkeys and apes remain as pets in those states, with no hope of rescue.

REGULATION	STATES
None (primates may be kept as pets, unlicensed)	AL, IN, KS, MI, NE, NV, NC, OK, SC, TX, VA, WI
Some primate species allowed, others banned	AR, AZ, MS, TN
License required	DE, FL, ID, MO, ND, RI, SD, WY
Banned (no primates may be kept as pets)	AK, CA, CO, CT, GA, HI, IL, IA, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MN, MT, NH, NJ, NM, NY, OH, OR, PA, UT, VT, WA, WV

LOCAL: Within states that do not have bans or licensure requirements, some city and county ordinances have been enacted to require licenses or to prohibit the keeping of primates as pets. These jurisdictions include Fairfax County, VA; Fayetteville, AR; Topeka, KS; Kansas City, MO; Charlotte, NC; and Tucson, AZ.

AWI POSITION STATEMENT

Primates are highly intelligent and social wild animals, who should never be kept as pets. AWI favors laws to ban the keeping of primates as companion animals. Whenever possible, monkeys and apes currently held as pets should be given to sanctuaries that are capable of providing appropriate care.



Animal Welfare
Institute

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PRIMATES ARE NOT PETS



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ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE



In the wild, stump-tailed macaques live together in large social groups. Bam Bam was isolated in a squalid, moldy shed for 18 years, before she was released to a sanctuary.

THE PROBLEM

Nonhuman primates of all sizes and species are kept as pets in the United States. The total number is unknown, but most estimates suggest tens of thousands. In the wild, monkeys and apes live in social groups, but most kept as pets are isolated from others of their species, and in conditions completely inadequate for their health and well-being.

Primates are particularly unsuited for life as pets. Even the most well-meaning of owners are not typically able to meet their complex needs. Cute and cuddly as infants, primates can quickly grow to become powerful and potentially aggressive, capable of causing significant injuries to the owners. Attempts to mold a monkey or an ape to fit an owner's expectations almost always end very badly for the animal. While a few are fortunate enough to be placed in sanctuaries, the majority live shortened, deprived, pain-filled lives.



A pet monkey caused permanent damage to this woman's hand, even after being bottle-raised.

THE PET PRIMATE TRADE

Since 1975, it has been illegal to import nonhuman primates into the United States for the pet trade (42 CFR 71.53); however, licensed and unlicensed dealers provide a continuous supply of baby monkeys and apes to meet the insatiable demand of people who don't understand that these are wild animals, who cannot be domesticated and are not suitable as companion animals. The Internet is rife with advertisements of baby primates for sale. Often for less than the cost of a pure-bred dog, a person can buy virtually any monkey species.

CASE STUDY: SUMMER

As a baby macaque, Summer (who is shown on the cover) was endearingly cute and cuddly and looked around with the most soulful eyes. Summer was born at a private breeder's facility. Unlike her wild cousins, who are nursed for six months and stay with their mothers for a year, Summer was forcibly removed from her mother when she was just a few days old—a common occurrence in the pet primate industry. Despite her fragile state and young age, she was then put into a tiny crate and shipped thousands of miles to the person who bought her.



Jala was weak and emaciated when she was released to a sanctuary. It took her almost a year to recover.



As Summer got older and diaper changes became a struggle, she was often left in a soiled diaper for days. Years of this left Summer's skin hairless and inflamed.

Summer was kept in a diaper, a common practice with pet monkeys. As she grew, she increasingly fought this. When she started biting, her owner had all of her teeth removed. From then on, her tongue would not stay in her mouth and she had to eat a diet of mushy, processed food. Her owner finally just kept a diaper on her with duct tape, often not changing it for days. The resulting diaper rash permanently damaged the skin around her abdomen and genitals.

Summer's owner routinely shaved her face and body, leaving razor burns, and forced her to wear human clothes, including shoes. Summer spent the vast majority of her time, however, alone in her small cage, rocking neurotically under a blanket. Her leg muscles atrophied from lack of use. When she was let out, she was kept on a leash, attached to a collar around her abdomen. The collar was too tight and never taken off, eventually embedding into her skin and requiring veterinary assistance to remove. If she tried to climb on anything (a normal monkey behavior), she would be pulled down and yelled at, causing her to regurgitate her food in fear. This was Summer's life for 17 years, until she was finally released to a sanctuary, where she was able to begin a long and arduous healing process.