CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL REGULATION
111 EAST FIRST STREET

RELEASE DATE:
March 13, 1970

Contact: Jim McNamara - Susan Bryant
Department of Aniaml Regulation
624-5211 Extention 1771

If you want to bring a wild animal into your home, treat it with respect and extreme caution. That's the advice of Robert I. Rush, General Manager of the Los Angeles Department of Animal Regulation.

As head of the City's prime animal control agency, Rush is obliged by city ordinance to issue wild animal permits to city residents who seek to add a touch of jungle ecology to their domestic decor. In exercising the mandate, he issues permits as if they were medical prescriptions marked "dangerous--keep away from children." He would like to add "and everybody else."

"Anyone who invites a wild animal to share his home should treat it like a pistol with a hair trigger, "Rush says. "The animal can be sweet, docile and gentle 99 percent of the time. It's when he pulls the trigger that it's too late."

During the four month period, November, 1969, through February, 1970, the Department of Animal Regulation issued home occupancy permits for 75 wild animals in the City of Los Angeles. The permits validate personal ownership of monkeys, a chimp, cheeta, boa constrictors,

-more-

pythons, ocelots, bobcats, raccoons, opossum, river otter, foxes, falcons, and hawks.

"These creatures represent only a small sample of the wild life prevalent in Los Angeles homes," Rush says. "Our files are filled with complaints of wild animals maintained without permits in private homes or apartments."

Recently, a hooded cobra was snared in an apartment. A Malayan Sun Bear was found frolicking near Hollywood Bowl. A seal, with a rope around its neck, was found roaming the streets of South Central Los Angeles. A bloodthirsty tayra, elongated cousin of the beaver, was found near Studio City. A lion cub was flushed from beneath a house near the Coliseum. Snakes of all types have been found on residential properties. In nearly all cases, identity of ownership was established.

Wild animal permits are authorized by the General Manager of the Department of Animal Regulation. A person wishing to house certain wild animals can do so, if, in the opinion of the General Manager "any such animal or reptile may be kept or maintained without menacing the safety of any person or property...."

The General Manager does not grant permits easily or automatically on request. Safe quartering must be provided, and the animal must not constitute a nuisance problem to neighbors.

If you're interested in keeping a bear, buffalo, civet, gorilla, hyena, hippopotamus, lion, vulture or a yak in your backyard, forget it. These, and other wild animals of similar nature, are jungle or zoo material.

Many of Rush's wild animal problems in the home stem from pet shops.

"A number of wild animal distributors in the Southern California area have sold wild animals without notifying the innocent customer that he must pay $15 for a wild animal permit if he lives in the City of Los Angeles," says Rush. "When the illegal animal is impounded or the owner is instructed to secure a permit, he usually blames the Department of Animal Regulation for unfair practices, and not the distributor."

Roy Kabat, wild animal trainer and owner of a movie-animal leasing compound in Chatsworth, subscribes to the concept that wild animals have no place in the home.

"They're not only dangerous, they're a bother and expense," he says. He can't recall the number of wild animals he has granted sanctuary when their owners have tired of their novelty. Some he has rejected. A free bear, for instance, whose food bill, he knew, was out of sight.

"There is no such thing as a tame animal," Kabat insists, "even a dog can have an off-day."

Rush, a prime mover in support of wild life conservation, believes wild animals would be better off if left in their native habitat.

"Keep the wild animals at home--their home," is Rush's creed.

--30--