



**Amherst County Board of Supervisors  
County Ordinance No. 2025-4**

**AN ORDINANCE, NO. 2025-4**

Amending and reenacting Chapter 3, Animals to add Article IV, Wild or Exotic Animals to the code of the County of Amherst, Virginia.

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Approved as to form and legality by the Amherst County Attorney

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**FIRST READING: Board of Supervisors, August 5, 2025**  
**PUBLIC HEARING: Board of Supervisors, September 16, 2025**

**WHEREAS**, the Amherst County Board of Supervisors has been advised that certain wild or exotic animals are being imported into Amherst, County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Amherst County Board of Supervisors now deems it appropriate to adopt an ordinance to regulate the keeping of such wild or exotic animals in order to preserve the public health.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY ORDAINED** that the Amherst County Board of Supervisors does hereby amend and reenact the Amherst County Code by amending and reenacting Chapter 3, Animals by adding Article IV, Wild or Exotic Animals, as follows:

**ARTICLE IV – WILD OR EXOTIC ANIMALS**

**Sec. 3-78 – Definitions.**

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this article, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

*Wild or exotic animal* means any live non-human primate, raccoon, skunk, wolf or hybrid canine, coyote, squirrel, fox, leopard, panther, tiger, lion, cheetah, bear, wild cat (e.g., bobcat, lynx and caracal, serval, ocelot), crocodilian (e.g., alligators, caimans, gavials), venomous snake, venomous reptile, scorpions (other than those in the genus *Pandinus*); widow, recluse, funnel-web, banana/wandering, sand or trapdoor spiders and tarantulas (except those native to North or South America and the Mexican red knee variety) or any other warm-blooded mammal or marsupial that can normally be found in a wild state. All domestically bred or legally imported birds, ratites, non-venomous snakes, non-venomous reptiles, rear-fanged snakes, amphibians, fish, ferrets, rabbits, rats, mice, gerbils, chinchillas, hedgehogs, sugar gliders and guinea pigs which have been bred in captivity are excluded from this definition.

**Sec. 3-80 – Permit Required.**

- (a) Any resident who possesses a wild or exotic animal as of the date of the adoption of this article may lawfully retain such animal until such time as it dies of natural causes, is euthanized or is legally relocated, provided the owner registers the animal with the county within sixty (60) days of the adoption of this article. At the time of registration, the owner must provide complete information, including but not limited to: age, sex, color, species and number of wild or exotic animals, location of wild or exotic animals housed on the property, and photographs of the wild

or exotic animal(s), in addition to the owner's name, proof of residency, address, telephone number and email address.

- (b) No person shall keep or permit to be kept on his premises any wild or exotic animal, unless that person shall have previously obtained a permit from the county for such animal, except that persons holding a Category I, II, or III wildlife rehabilitation permit issued by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources may possess native wild animals for the purpose of rehabilitation pursuant to the conditions of their wildlife rehabilitation permit.
- (c) Applications for a wild or exotic animal permit shall be made to animal control on an application form prescribed by animal control, and shall be accompanied by a \$50 permit fee. Animal control officers shall have the authority to issue or deny permits for wild or exotic animals. A decision by the chief animal control officer to deny a permit may be appealed to the Board of Supervisors.
- (d) No permit shall be approved by animal control or the Board of Supervisors unless the applicant has demonstrated in the application:
  - (1) That the wild or exotic animal will be securely enclosed at all times in a manner that is appropriate for the character of the animal;
  - (2) That the animal will be provided with an appropriate habitat and be properly fed, husbandry, care for and handled with proper veterinary care;
  - (3) That the keeping of such animal on the premises is consistent with the nature and character of the neighborhood; and
  - (4) That the owner has obtained any and all federal or state permits required for possession of that particular species of animal.
- (e) The permit shall be nontransferable and subject to such conditions as are deemed necessary to assure the public safety and welfare and appropriate care of the animal. The permit shall list, by species and quantity, each wild or exotic animal permitted to be kept on the premises, and shall authorize the applicant to keep only the animals identified in the application at the address listed in the application. Any permitted animal that dies or is sold or relocated out of the county may be replaced by an animal of the same species. No animal may be moved to another location with the county without the prior issuance of a permit for the new location.
- (f) Upon notice and an opportunity to be heard, any permit shall be subject to revocation by animal control for any of the following reasons:
  - (1) Failure to comply with the terms of this article or the conditions of the permit;
  - (2) Falsification of any information on the permit application; or
  - (3) Violation of any local, state or federal laws applicable to animals.

**Sec. 3-81 – Containment.**

- (a) Any wild or exotic animal permitted under this article must be contained in a manner that is species-appropriate which also meets the definition of "adequate shelter" as set forth in Section 3.2-6500 of the Code of Virginia (1950, as amended). Shelters for wild or exotic animals shall be inspected by an animal control officer.
- (b) It shall be unlawful for the owner of any wild or exotic animal to allow such animal to run at large. It shall be the duty of animal control or other officers who find any wild or exotic animal running at large to take such animal into custody.
- (c) The owner of such animal found to be running at large shall be required to pay a fee equivalent to the actual costs incurred in locating, capturing, housing and/or dispatching said animal.

**Sec. 3-82 – Penalty.**

(a) Any person found to be in violation of this article shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor.

**§ 2. That this ordinance shall be in force and effect upon adoption.**

Adopted this 16<sup>th</sup> day of September 2025.




Claudia Tucker, Chair  
Amherst County Board of Supervisors

**Member**

**Vote**

Claudia D. Tucker, Chair .....	<u>Aye</u>
Tom Martin, Vice-Chair.....	<u>Aye</u>
David W. Pugh, Jr. ....	<u>absent</u>
Chris Adams .....	<u>Aye</u>
Drew Wade. ....	<u>Aye</u>

**ATTEST:**

  
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Jeremy S. Bryant, Clerk  
Amherst County Board of Supervisors

