

ADVICE ON THE DWA

The Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976¹ amended 2007 requires that any person who wishes to keep a dangerous wild animal as specified in the Schedule² must first obtain a DWA licence from the appropriate Local Authority. Inspection of the premises by a veterinary surgeon and consideration of their report is obligatory before the Local Authority may grant a DWA licence.

Presently it is considered only a small percentage of keepers obliged to be in possession of a DWA Licence have made the appropriate application. This is believed to be associated in part with a 'mistrust' of the veterinary profession due to a 'perceived' lack of knowledge of exotic species. At present Local Authorities vary in their approach to DWA inspections and BVZS are actively lobbying the Local Authority association with the assistance of BVA to recognise the need for a consistent approach using suitably qualified veterinary inspectors.

Although any registered veterinary surgeon can be approached by local authorities to carry out DWA inspections BVZS believe it is advisable that only individuals with the relevant experience of the species under consideration would be advised to carry out inspections for DWA licences. Such individuals may be listed on the Secretary of States List for Inspections under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 or possess recognised post graduate qualifications in zoological and wildlife medicine. We believe unsuitably, qualified inspectors risk a Regulatory complaint for practising outside their expertise or significant civil claims if rejection of a licence leads to the applicant, such as a pet shop owner, suffering a financial loss.

Although a DWA veterinary inspection and report can be concerned with any aspects of the requirements to be satisfied it will tend to concentrate on the suitability of accommodation, feeding and bedding. To assist the membership, BVZS have produced a standard inspection template in an attempt to ensure conformity in DWA licence inspections. This template should be used taking into account the accompanying supporting guidance for the species concerned.

Most members of BVZS are happy to advise if a veterinary surgeon feels uncertain of their position if a Local Authority or applicant approaches them to request an inspection. A list of members with appropriate qualifications and contact details is available on the BVZS website or via the RCVS.

^{1,2} <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/38>