



ANIMAL CONCERN

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Wednesday, 12 April 2006

Councillor Douglas McAllister,
Convener of the Licensing Committee,
West Dunbartonshire Council,
Garshake Road,
Dumbarton G82 3PU

Dear Councillor McAllister,

I write regarding the application by Mrs. Natalie Cox for a license under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 to allow her to keep two Asian Leopard cats and two African Serval cats at her home at 17 West Cochno Holdings, Hardgate, Clydebank.

Animal Concern objects to the granting of this license and urges the Licensing Committee to refuse the application.

We understand the applicant provided a totally unsuitable enclosure for the two Serval cats. The enclosure being half the minimum size it should be, had exposed electrical fittings, inadequate heating, lighting and ventilation, unsuitable flooring, no sleeping area or bedding material, dangerous drainage facilities and several other shortcomings. These many failures to provide for the basic needs of the animals indicate the applicant does not know enough about the animals to care for them properly and is not a fit and proper person to be granted a license under the Act. The fact that the applicant purchased and imported the cats before providing suitable accommodation or obtaining a DWAA license also shows a total lack of competence.

Even if the accommodation is brought up to standard we object to cats of a species which roams vast areas of savannah being forced to exist in an environment of only 800 square feet.

We note that your veterinary inspection described the accommodation for the Asian Leopard cats as "not large" and only "of adequate size". Again several of the same shortcomings of the Serval enclosure were also reported for the Asian Leopard enclosure.

Exotic cats kept in zoos and safari parks (which provide them with far more space than is available on a Clydebank smallholding) often show serious behavioural problems caused simply by being kept in captivity. These cats should not be kept in captivity, especially by someone who has shown a total lack of understanding of the basic needs of the species.

We note the applicant has continued with her application despite it being made clear that the animals must be neutered and cannot be used for breeding either with each other or by cross-breeding with domestic cats. That at least suggests the applicant is not profit motivated or driven by reports that kittens bred from these exotic cats can be sold for five figure sums to people who regard them as no more than living bling or the feline equivalent of the American pit bull terrier. Even if the applicant genuinely only wants the cats as pets and not a financial investment we urge you to refuse the application on the grounds of her lack of knowledge of the animals shown by her inability to provide them with proper accommodation.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,
For Animal Concern