



Federal Laws and Regulations

Proposed laws must first go through a bill process, be sponsored, and passed, before being signed into law. There are federal, state, and local laws. Regulations are rules created by a governmental agency, often to implement a law. An agency holds a public hearing, then decides to adopt or reject a regulation. Listed below are some, but not all, federal fish and wildlife laws and regulations:

Federal Laws

- [Animal Welfare Act \(PDF\)](#) (1966)
The purpose of the Act is to prevent animal cruelty and abuse within laboratories, zoos, the entertainment industry (e.g., circuses), and captive breeding. It is the only Federal that regulates the treatment of animals in research, teaching, testing, exhibition, transport, and by dealers.
- [Bald Eagle Protection Act](#) (1940)
It is unlawful, without a federal permit, to take, possess, sell, purchase or barter, transport, export, or import, at any time or manner any bald eagle or golden eagle, alive or dead.
- [Endangered Species Act](#) (1973)
The purpose of the Act is to protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems upon which they depend.
- [Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#) (1918)
It is unlawful, without a federal permit, to take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird, or the parts, nests, or eggs of such a bird.
- [The Lacey Act](#) (1900)
The purpose of the Act is to protect wildlife, fish, and plants from illegal trafficking and trade.
- [Captive Wildlife Safety Act \(PDF\)](#) (2003)
It is unlawful to import, export, sale, receipt, acquisition, or purchase, in interstate or foreign commerce, of certain live wildlife species except by persons who meet the criteria of specific, listed exemptions.
- [Big Cat Public Safety Act](#) (2022)
The purpose of the Act is to ensure the health and welfare of big cats, protect the public from the dangers associated with private ownership of big cats, and combat wildlife trafficking.
- [The Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture Act](#) (2019)
It is unlawful to intentionally crush, burn, drown, suffocate, impale or other acts of serious harm to "living non-human mammals, birds, reptiles, or amphibians." The law also bans any photograph, motion picture film, video or digital recording or electronic image that depicts animal cruelty.

Federal of Code Regulations

TITLE 50: WILDLIFE and FISHERIES.

- [Control of Depredating and Otherwise Injurious Birds \[§21.1-21.183\]](#)
- [Prohibited Taking \(Marine Mammals\) \[§216.11\].](#)
It is unlawful to "take" any marine mammal, , including harassment.
- [Endangered and Threatened Species \[§17.1-17.199\].](#)
It is unlawful to "take" any Threatened or Endangered species, including harassment.