

3. Commercial Use of Rattlesnakes

| Today's Item | Information <input type="checkbox"/> | Action <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|--|---|--|
| Discuss and potentially make recommendations for amendments to regulations regarding the commercial display and use of rattlesnakes. | | |
| Summary of Previous/Future Actions | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial vetting Discussion and potential recommendation Commission expected to consider WRC recommendations | September 11, 2025; WRC January 13, 2026; WRC February 11-12, 2026 | |

Background

The Commission regulates the take of California wildlife species, including (in many cases) the commercial use of wildlife. Currently, there is no regulatory pathway for those who wish to use rattlesnakes for financial gain or profit; examples of use include dog aversion training, safe handling courses, and the film industry. The Department presented this topic at WRC's September 2025 meeting (see Exhibit 1).

The ability to obtain authorization to use and display snakes already exists for non-native species under Section 671 (restricted species), but that does not extend to California native reptiles because currently none are designated as restricted species. Existing regulations (for example, sections 42, 43, 650 and 651) that permit commercial use of native snakes do not allow the activities addressed in the recommended regulatory amendments.

Today, WRC will continue its discussion of the Department's recommendations and will potentially develop a recommendation for Commission consideration.

Significant Public Comments (N/A)

Recommendation

Commission staff: Recommend the Commission support a future rulemaking regarding the commercial use of rattlesnakes, based on today's discussion.

Department: Support a future rulemaking regarding the commercial use of rattlesnakes, as recommended.

Exhibits

- [Department presentation from September 11, 2025 WRC meeting \(for background purposes only\)](#)

Committee Direction/Recommendation

The Wildlife Resources Committee recommends that the Commission support a future rulemaking regarding the commercial use of rattlesnakes based on the Department's recommendation and today's discussion.



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NATIVE RATTLESNAKE COMMERCIAL EXHIBITION

PRESENTATION TO THE WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMITTEE OF THE CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION



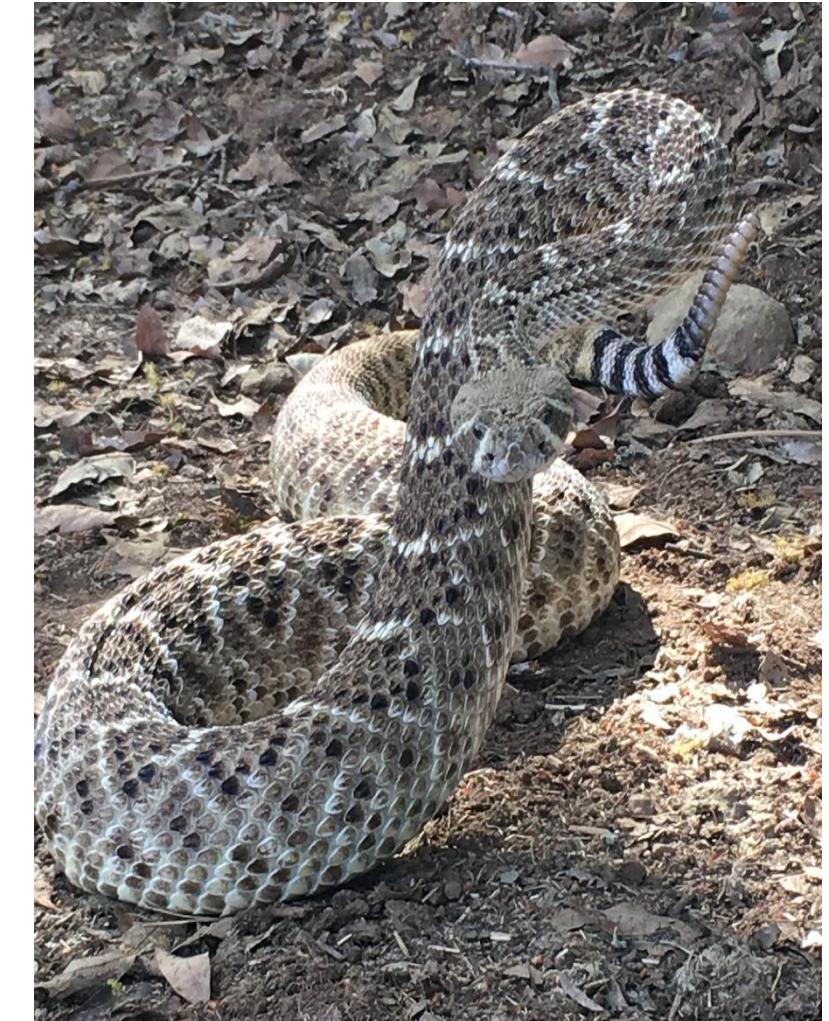
September 11, 2025

David Kiene, Office of General Counsel

AC Nathan Smith, Law Enforcement Division Special Operations
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Background/Presentation Overview

- Background
 - Commercial venom extraction 2017-18
 - This topic not addressed at the time
 - Scale and scope of known “enterprise” has increased
 - Human wildlife conflict increase in rattlesnake habitat - Safe handling
 - Injuries to pets - Dog aversion training
 - Paid exhibition - Film use
- Native Rattlesnakes ONLY
 - Non-native species covered under Title 14, Section 671



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Current Regulations

- Authority Codes
 - Fish and Game Code sections 5061 and 702
 - Reference in prior rulemaking for Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 42
- Title 14, CCR, Section 5.60
 - Bag limit established of two (recreational) take per subspecies listed
- Title 14, CCR, Subsection 43(c)
 - Illegal propagation/possession of native reptiles for commercial purposes
 - Unless listed species; rattlesnake not listed



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Rattlesnake Regulation History

In 2018 Commission adds Section 42:

- Commercial venom extraction for antivenom development
- Referencing Authority
 - California Fish and Game Code Sections 5060 and 5061
 - Penal Code Section 597
 - Government Code Sections 11503 and 11506



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Recommended Regulations

Create permitting process for commercial use of rattlesnakes for (examples):

- Film Industry (exhibition)
 - Legal pathway
- Safe Handling
 - Reduce lethal encounters
 - Improve opportunity for rehabilitation (injured)
- Dog Aversion Training
 - Reduce lethal encounters for pets and snakes
 - Reduce injuries to dogs
 - Reduce human wildlife conflict



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Public Inquiries – Continual



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Inquiries from:

- Dog aversion trainers
- Film exhibitors
- Safe handling trainers
- Pet owners
- Media and legislators seeking clarification on illegal activities



Timeline 2025-2026



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- Wildlife Resources Committee meetings
 - September 2025
 - January 2026
- Potential Notice Hearing
 - Spring or summer 2026



Intended Outcomes/Recommendations

Create permitting mechanism for commercial exhibition of native rattlesnakes

- Reduce lethal encounters
- Reduce human wildlife conflict with native rattlesnakes
- Establish legal pathway for existing activities
- Placement options for rehabilitation facilities



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Credits | Questions | Contact



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