CHAPTER 16

Importation of Wildlife

**SECTION 50-16-10. "Wildlife" defined.**

For the purpose of this chapter, "wildlife" means a member of the animal kingdom including without limitation a mammal, fish, bird, amphibian, reptile, mollusk, crustacean, arthropod, or other invertebrate.

HISTORY: 1979 Act No. 172, § 1; 1989 Act No. 41, § 1.

**SECTION 50-16-20. Importation of wildlife for certain purposes prohibited; investigation; permit.**

(A) It is unlawful for a person to import, possess, or transport for the purpose of release or to introduce or bring into this State any live wildlife of the following types without a permit from the department:

(1) a furbearer, a member of the family Cervidae, a nondomestic member of the families Suidae (pigs), Tayassuidae (peccaries), Bovidae (bison, mountain goat, mountain sheep), coyote, bear, or turkey (genus Meleagris). Furbearer includes, but is not limited to, red and gray fox, raccoon, opossum, muskrat, mink, skunk, otter, bobcat, weasel, and beaver;

(2) a species of marine or estuarine fish, crustacean, mollusk, or other marine invertebrate not already found in the wild, or not native to this State.

(3) a species of freshwater fish, crustacean, mollusk, or other freshwater invertebrate not already found in the wild or not native to this State.

(B) A permit may be granted only after the investigations and inspections of the wildlife have been made as the department considers necessary and the department approves the possession, transportation, or importation into the State. The department may not issue a permit unless it finds:

(1) the wildlife was taken lawfully in the jurisdiction in which it originated;

(2) the importation, release, or possession of the wildlife is not reasonably expected to adversely impact the natural resources of the State or its wildlife populations.

HISTORY: 1979 Act No. 172, § 1; 1989 Act No. 41, § 1; 1992 Act No. 458, § 1.

**SECTION 50-16-25. Unlawful release of pigs; permit exceptions.**

(A) It is unlawful to:

(1) import, possess, buy, sell, offer for sale, transfer, or transport a live member of the family Suidae (pig) taken from the wild; or

(2) release a live member of the family Suidae (pig) into the wild.

(B) Each pig imported, bought, sold, offered for sale, possessed, transferred, transported, or released in violation of this section constitutes a separate offense.

(C) The department may seize and destroy any pig obtained pursuant to this section.

HISTORY: 2005 Act No. 13, § 1; 2010 Act No. 211, § 1, eff upon approval (became law without the Governor's signature on June 8, 2010); 2021 Act No. 71 (H.3539), § 2, eff May 17, 2021.

**SECTION 50-16-30. Importation of diseased animals prohibited.**

It is unlawful for a person to possess, transport, or otherwise bring into the State or release or introduce into the State any diseased wildlife or other animal that reasonably might be expected to pose a public health or safety hazard as determined by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control after consultation with the department.

HISTORY: 1979 Act No. 172, § 1; 1989 Act No. 41, § 1.

**SECTION 50-16-40. Exception to permit requirement for wildlife imported for exhibition purposes.**

Wildlife imported for exhibition purposes only by state wildlife departments, municipal zoos or parks, public museums, public zoological parks, and public scientific or educational institutions operated not for profit, and transient circuses are not required to procure a permit under Section 50-16-20. Nothing in this chapter prohibits the department or its duly authorized agents from possessing, importing, or releasing wildlife.

HISTORY: 1979 Act No. 172, § 1; 1989 Act No. 41, § 1.

**SECTION 50-16-50. Authority to promulgate regulations.**

The department may promulgate regulations to effectuate the provisions of this chapter.

HISTORY: 1979 Act No. 172, § 1; 1989 Act No. 41, § 1.

**SECTION 50-16-60. Exception to permit requirement for certain wildlife imported for sale as pets.**

The importation of the following wildlife for sale in the pet trade does not require a permit:

1. tropical fishes

2. rats and mice

3. rabbits

4. canaries

5. gerbils

6. shell parakeets

7. love birds

8. cockatiels

9. parrots

10. toucans

11. mynah birds

12. finches

13. hamsters

14. guinea pigs

15. reptiles

16. amphibians.

The provisions of this section do not privilege the import or possession of a species otherwise protected or regulated by other provisions of this title.

HISTORY: 1979 Act No. 172, § 1; 1989 Act No. 41, § 1.

**SECTION 50-16-70. Penalties.**

(A) A person violating the provisions of this chapter, or any condition of a permit issued pursuant to this chapter, is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than six months, or both. The department must suspend the hunting privileges of a person convicted of violating this chapter for one year from the date of the conviction.

(B) In addition to any other penalties provided by law, a person convicted of a violation of subsection (A) is also subject to the confiscation, forfeiture, and sale provisions contained in Section 50-11-740 for any property, vehicle, trailer, or other means of conveyance utilized to import, possess, or transport the animal.

(C) For the purposes of this section, each animal imported in violation of subsection (A) constitutes a separate offense.

(D) Notwithstanding Chapter 3, Title 22, magistrates court shall have jurisdiction over actions arising under this section.

HISTORY: 1979 Act No. 172, § 1; 1989 Act No. 41, § 1; 2010 Act No. 211, § 3, eff upon approval (became law without the Governor's signature on June 8, 2010); 2012 Act No. 228, § 3, eff June 18, 2012.