



## **Guidance on the keeping of Procyonidae: Raccoons, Coatis and Kinkajou**

Dangerous Wild Animals (Northern Ireland) Order 2004



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| <b>1. Species names of commonly kept Procyonids</b> | <i>Procyon lotor</i><br><i>Nasua nasua</i><br><br><i>Potus flavus</i>   | Raccoon<br>Coatimundi, coati<br><br>Kinkajou |
| <b>2. Additional information</b>                    | <p>All members of the Procyonidae are included in the Schedule to the Order.</p> <p>Procyonids have sharp teeth and can give a nasty bite.</p>  |  |
| <b>3. Housing overview</b>                          | <p>Procyonids can be kept indoors or in caged enclosures outdoors, as long as their temperature requirements are met.</p>   |  |
| <b>4. Keeping experience</b>                        | <p>In order to protect the welfare of these animals, keepers must be able to demonstrate a good knowledge of husbandry and handling of the species they wish to keep.</p> <p>There should normally be a second named person nominated and included on the licence who is competent to care for the animals should the owner be absent or incapacitated.</p> |  |

## Housing Recommendations

- 5. Construction** Cage floors should be constructed from a solid material to prevent damage to the animals' feet. These animals have a high level of dexterity and learn by observation. They may easily learn to undo bolts and other closure devices, therefore cages must be secured by key operated locks.

Enclosures must be able to withstand the animals climbing and digging. It is recommended that the fence have a buried wire "skirting" fitted at a 90° angle to the vertical fencing inside the enclosure to prevent animals tunnelling out. Outdoor enclosures must have a roof.

Kinkajou are a tropical species and if kept outdoors should have unlimited access to an indoor housing area.

- 6. Fencing** Fencing must be strong enough to withstand the weight of animals climbing on it, and the mesh size used must be small enough to prevent the animals becoming entangled. If the enclosure fencing is the only means of separation from visitors, it is strongly recommended that the mesh size is small enough to prevent people putting their fingers through it.

An indoor aviary-style cage may be used to house single procyonids indoors so long as there is adequate provision for exercise.

**7. Size**

The recommended minimum cage size for a single animal is 5 m<sup>2</sup> (50 ft<sup>2</sup>) with a height of 2 m (6 ft), and it should have a wire roof or ceiling. For each additional animal, cage size should be increased by 25 percent of the original floor area.

Each cage should have sufficient perching areas and nest boxes to enable all the animals in the enclosure to use them at the same time.

If smaller indoor enclosures are used, the animal must have secure access to a larger area within the house during a portion of the day.

**8. Temperature**

Normal outdoor temperatures in Northern Ireland should be tolerable for raccoons, however adequate shade and protection from the elements should be provided.

Coatis are a sub-tropical and tropical species. When temperatures drop below 4° C (40° F) heating must be provided in the den or nest box area.

Kinkajous are a tropical species and require heated nest areas when the temperature drops below 16° C (60° F). They should always have access to an indoor enclosure, whether in the house or an outbuilding, and it should be maintained at average temperatures above 20° C (70° F).

**9. Lighting**

Natural lighting is required by these species, with a normal day and night cycle. Raccoons and kinkajous are nocturnal and will be most active after dusk.

- 10. Ventilation** If the animals are kept indoors, a suitable form of ventilation must be provided.
- 11. Drainage** The drainage of outdoor enclosures must be capable of rapidly removing all excess water. Drains should be designed to avoid injury to the animals, and sited so as not to impede their movement. Any open drains, other than those carrying surface water, should be outside the enclosure. Any faecal material must be disposed of in an environmentally sound manner.
- For indoor enclosures the substrate should be changeable or easily cleaned.
- 12. Cleanliness** Faeces and food debris should be removed on a daily basis. Water bowls, hammocks, and toys should be disinfected regularly. The base of the enclosure should be cleaned, and bedding thrown away regularly, with particular attention being paid to the cleanliness of the nest boxes.
- 13. Social dynamics and behavioural considerations** Procyonids of the same species may be kept together, although space should increase proportionately. More than one nest box, water bowl, and feeding station should be made available if more than one procyonid is kept in the same cage. This will allow lower ranking animals to feed without undue stress from dominant animals.
- It is recommended that procyonids are kept in groups or, if kept singly, are provided with plenty of human interaction. Different species should not be mixed.

**14. Prevention of escape**

Enclosures should be locked when the owners are not in attendance. Cage mesh should be 2.5 cm x 2.5 cm (1 inch x 1 inch) or finer.

For coatis, a double door with a space of approximately 2m<sup>2</sup> (18 ft<sup>2</sup>) separating the two gates should be erected at the entrance to outdoor enclosures, allowing the keeper to enter without a risk of the animals escaping. Both gates should be padlocked.

Procyonids should not be left unattended in the house when out of their enclosures. Even within a locked house, they have the ability to learn to turn keys and work door handles. If the animals are allowed to run free inside a room, external doors must be locked and windows must be closed or protected with mesh to prevent escape.

If an outdoor enclosure is accessible by the public, for example, adjoining a public highway, steps should be taken to prevent the possibility of the public gaining access to, or being injured by, the animals. This may require the erection of a secondary fence (a stand-off barrier), or a solid wall on the accessible sides of the enclosure. A fine wire mesh should be used to prevent people putting their fingers through the gaps. Warning signs may also be required.

**15. Food, drink and bedding**

Procyonids in captivity have a tendency to put on weight. Appropriate diets, either complete or a mixture of foods, should be provided.

Raccoons eat plants and meat, and do well with a selection of fruit and vegetables, and a combination of dry and wet cat or dog food. An ideal diet would include at least 50% plants and fruit.

Coatis eat plants and meat. A combination of fruit, vegetables, dog food and monkey diet suits them well.

Kinkajous are principally fruit-eaters. They must have a constant supply of a range of fruit, or a complete dry frugivore diet. They do require some protein, in the form of eggs, insects or similar.

Fresh water, or ideally, running water must be constantly available, and must be deep enough for coatis and raccoons to play and handle food in.

Dry inedible bedding should be provided in at least two nest boxes, to allow the animals to hide away from their surroundings and to sleep during the day.

**16. Visiting interval**

The animals must be monitored at appropriate intervals, normally at least twice every 24 hours. However, these social animals thrive with lengthy contact and interaction.

**17. Exercise and Enrichment**

The enclosure or exercise room should be big enough for the animals to exercise. The use of enrichment is desirable.

For these species, enrichment could include a hammock made from cloth or mesh that can be removed to be cleaned; hiding spaces, such as hollow logs, plastic barrels, or dog kennels and tree limbs or logs at various heights to promote climbing.

Climbing equipment, swings and branches will provide opportunities for exercise, enrichment and expression of natural behaviour.

Coati and raccoons dig in the wild. Providing a substrate in which they can dig is another appropriate means of enrichment.

Olfactory enrichment, such as scent trails and unusual smells are effective forms of enrichment for procyonids.

These animals may also appreciate some form of water in their enclosure, either in the form of a wading pool, shallow bath or stream, to allow bathing and food handling.

**18. Provision for capture and transportation**

Procyonid species can be transported to a veterinary surgeon in a locked wire or plastic cat carrier. A licence, issued by the Department of the Environment, for the keeping of these animals may specify restrictions on the movement of these animals and procedures to be followed.

- 19. Emergency planning** There should be a written contingency plan in place to be used in the event of an emergency, for example fire, flood, animal escape or injury to the keeper.
  
- 20. Notification Requirements** A licence, issued by the Department of the Environment, for the keeping of these animals may specify procedures to be followed in the event of an escape and on the provision of information to the Emergency Services (e.g. the Fire Service) on the dangerous wild animals being kept.

You are required to notify the Department of the Environment of any intentions to breed the animals.

## **21. Prevention and control of spread of infectious disease**

Provision should be made to allow separation of sick or injured animals from a group.

The keeper should provide details of their veterinary arrangements with a practice prepared to treat the species they keep. A schedule of veterinary care, including routine parasite control and vaccinations for feline and canine diseases, is necessary, and the keeping of records of veterinary attention is essential.

Animals acquired from outside the United Kingdom may be subject to rabies quarantine regulations. Anyone requiring further information should contact the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

There are no transmissible diseases carried by these animals that pose a risk to the general public as long as there is no direct contact, and visitors are not allowed to handle the animals or their by-products. They may, however, carry the worm species *Baylisascaris* which can be transmitted to humans with serious consequences if the faeces from raccoons is accidentally eaten. For this reason, absolutely no access to the enclosure should be given to the public, or their dogs.

## Explanatory Notes

These notes have been produced to provide people wishing to keep dangerous wild animals with guidance on the requirements they may have to meet. In determining whether or not a licence should be issued, the Department of the Environment will consider the information provided by the applicant when applying for a licence. The Department will also arrange for a suitably qualified person to carry out an inspection of the premises at which the animal or animals will be kept and the inspector's report will also be taken into consideration. It is at the Department's discretion to waive certain recommendations, or add additional ones, to the guidance provided in this document. There is a right to appeal within 21 days if a licence is refused or if the applicant contests conditions applied to a licence.

## Contact Information

*For further information on the Dangerous Wild Animals (Northern Ireland) Order 2004, contact the Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Biodiversity Unit on (028) 9056 9557*

### **For CITES enquiries:**

Wildlife Licensing and Registration  
Service  
Global Wildlife Division  
**Department for Environment,  
Food and Rural Affairs**  
Zone 1/17 Temple Quay House  
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### **For rabies quarantine enquiries:**

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