

April 17, 2018

CBS News Sunday Morning
Box O
524 West 57th St.
New York, NY 10019

Dear CBS:

We were disappointed to see that your April 15 broadcast of “Animal Influencers: How popular pets on Instagram launch careers” failed to mention the harm that promoting ownership of exotic pets such as monkeys as to sell products can bring to the species.

Private possession of captive wildlife leads to further promulgation of the exotic pet trade, which doesn't end well for the animals and poses a danger to owners. While people typically acquire the pets when they are young they often discover they can't care for the animal when it becomes full grown and exhibits aggressive or anxious behavior such as biting, self-harm and pacing. Non-human primates are most often abandoned by their owners between the ages of two and eight (depending on the species) after they have started maturing. There are a myriad of incidents where exotic pets are killed following an incident of aggressive behavior, reinforcing our point that wildlife are not household pets.

While U.S. federal quarantine regulations forbid importing non-human primates as pets, there are no federal laws in the U.S. banning primate ownership or exotic animal ownership in general. Many states have no license or permit requirements or have statutes governing private possession of exotic animals.

Casting exotic animals as market influencers will only help to spur the illegal global trade of these species. Many animals are taken from their natural environments to supply the pet trade. Worldwide, an estimated 40,000 primates, four million birds, 640,000 reptiles, and 350 million tropical fish are traded live each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And it's estimated that 90 percent of wild animals kept as pets are dead within the first two years of captivity.

Friends of Animals manages a primate sanctuary in San Antonio, Texas. Almost two-thirds of the animals in the sanctuary are discarded pets. That's because at maturity the animals start to bite, and fight and resist their confinement.

Since your story was broadcast, we have already seen commentary online from viewers requesting information on how they can obtain monkeys and other exotic animals. CBS should follow up on this

story and inform viewers of the harm that comes from trying to domesticate wildlife that should be left in the wild.

Sincerely,



Priscilla Feral
President, Friends of Animals