

## NARBC Show and Summit

### **NARBC show and summit set for February 2010 to benefit PIJAC and USARK.**

December 15, 2009, 5 p.m. EST

The North American Reptile Breeders Conference (NARBC) has scheduled a reptile show and summit for February 2010 to raise awareness about legislation targeting the reptile industry. NARBC is organizing the event, which is open to the public, on behalf of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) and United States Association of Reptile Keepers (USARK).

The PIJAC/USARK Tinley Park Summit & Show will be held in Tinley Park, Ill., on Feb. 12, 13, and 14. The event includes a summit meeting, featuring speakers such as USARK President Andrew Wyatt, and Jamie Reaser, PIJAC's vice president of environmental policy and communications; reptile vendors; pet product manufacturers; and an auction to benefit PIJAC and USARK.

Event co-producer Brian Potter said the goal is to educate the general public about legislation that could affect the industry as well as raise funds to help protect reptile ownership.

"Some soccer moms may say it's just about just big snakes. No, [animal rights' activists] are coming after leopard geckos and bearded dragons," Potter said.

Among the most pressing pieces of legislation currently facing the reptile industry is S. 373 and H.R. 2811. When introduced, both bills sought to add "constrictor snakes of the species Python genera" to the list of injurious wildlife. According to PIJAC, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works amended S. 373 on Dec. 10 to include the nine species of large constrictor snakes that were assessed in a report published by the U.S. Geology Survey. The 302-page report, which came out in October, details the ecological risks associated with the Burmese python, reticulated python, Northern and Southern African python, Boa constrictors, yellow anaconda, Deschauensee's anaconda, green anaconda and Beni anaconda.

S. 373's companion bill, H.R. 2811, was recently amended to add only Burmese and African rock pythons to the list.

Some members of the pet trade, including PIJAC and USARK, have raised concerns about adding a species to the injurious wildlife list through legislative action, as opposed to the science-based risk analysis as established under the Lacey Act.

PIJAC has suggested that if either bill does move forward, it be amended to address only the Burmese python, "the one species of concern."

PIJAC also supports specific language that would allow interstate movement, subject to certain standards; allow exportation of live specimens to countries that allow importation; allow possession, subject to certain conditions (i.e. caging, recordkeeping) and establish a 120-day grace period, following the enactment of legislation, during which owners can take the necessary steps to comply with the new regulation.

In related python news, USARK and other reptile keepers are offering an \$18,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of anyone involved with the recent illegal release of a python in Florida.

The snake, a 12-foot-long Burmese python, was captured by authorities over the weekend of Dec. 5 in Port Tampa, Fla. Vernon Yates of Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation in Seminole, Fla., told the Associate Press that the snake's demeanor and condition indicated it was a pet that escaped or was released.

Reptile breeder and licensed python hunter Michael Cole of Tampa, Fla., said he is concerned that the timing of this python release is "suspicious."

The snake was captured shortly after Florida's Reptiles of Concern Technical Assistance Group met to discuss possible regulations for several snakes, including the Burmese python, and days before U.S. legislators were to hear S. 373.

Cole suspects the release could be a media stunt by an individual or group seeking to push its agenda of banning the

python trade.

“It’s not unfounded to have those kinds of thoughts, because it’s happened before,” Cole said, referring to a 2008 incident in which two Monocled cobras were released in North Carolina. According to NBC affiliate station, WITN, state wildlife officials believed the snakes were released by an animal rights group pushing for a ban on exotic animals.