

**“A Lion in my back yard”
by Mike Tovey**

If you have the desire to purchase, then the exotic animal trade in North America has the goods for you. The sale of exotic animals is big business estimated to be worth more than 100 million dollars a year in North America alone. While this large dollar figure may give the impression that exotics are expensive, such is not the case. Obtaining an exotic animal, even one that can pose a serious danger to human life, is alarmingly easy. It is not uncommon to find tigers being sold for \$800.00.

Throughout Canada, exotic animals can be found living in basements, barns and backyards. While a large number are kept for exhibition in zoos, the majority are kept by individuals as exotic pets. In Ontario, it is estimated that 500 cats, such as lions, tigers, cougars, lynx, and bobcat are being kept by private citizens.

Dealers in exotic animals have many outlets to advertise their wares. The internet has become a powerful tool in this respect with the ability to reach a large portion of the population. Exotic animal auctions are conducted across North American. Classified advertisements in newspapers and magazines advertise anything from hedgehogs to tigers.

It is a case of “Buyer Beware”. Dealers will downplay the problems associated with exotic animal ownership to close a sale. Terms, such as, “It’s just an oversize pussy cat, great with kids and will sleep on the end of your bed” are common when selling a large cats offspring. Just try to return it when it reaches maturity and you have no bed. Hopefully, that will not apply to your kids also. These are dangerous wild animals, not household pets.

Everyone should be aware of the animal suffering generated by the exotic animal trade. Bottom line is that if there were no buyers then there would not be any trade. Do your part in ending the suffering.

DISCOURAGE EXOTIC ANIMAL OWNERSHIP