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Ontario needs tougher animal captivity laws: OSPCA

Last Updated: Thursday, February 14, 2008 | 5:35 PM ET
CBC News

Ontario needs to overhaul its animal captivity law in the wake of the escape from a private zoo of a 180-kilogram jaguar, the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals says.

"Nobody is willing to accept responsibility," said Rob Laidlaw of the Ontario SPCA, which carries out animal cruelty investigations for the province.

"Everybody tries to slough it off on everybody else and as a result, nothing has ever been done and we've had escapes and we've had deaths."

On Tuesday, the OPP shot and killed a jaguar near Bracebridge, Ont., after it escaped from its cage and killed a family dog.

In the past year, a Japanese monkey and a Syrian brown bear also escaped from private zoos in Ontario.

Laidlaw said the escapes show Ontario's animal laws, which have not been overhauled since 1919, need to be updated.

Currently, there is no provincial law limiting the ownership of large, potentially dangerous animals.

Kristin Williams, a spokeswoman for the Ontario SPCA, said current laws give her agency few inspection powers and they need more.

"It's complaints driven, so we need the public to let us know if they see something that is a problem."

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