

# Are Tigers Happy?

By: Kiersten Setting

Many people know the new documentary series *Tiger King*. The series is filled with tigers in captivity and the opinions of different people that own tigers; such as if tigers should be held captive or be kept as pets. Tigers are going extinct and there are currently more tigers in the United States that are captive than tigers that live in the wild around the world. Some say that if the species is going extinct, then why wouldn't we breed more to populate them? Anyone can own a pet tiger as long as you have the right permits or any of the requirements that your state has in place. People that own tigers describe them like a house cat but bigger. They connect with people and that is why many tiger owners are worried that the laws will change and they won't be able to keep their pets. It does take a lot of money to care for a big cat and a lot of land as well. If a big cat is in captivity right now, it has most likely never been in the wild. If they are born in captivity, they still have their wild side in them due to natural instinct. People can make a tiger hunt for their food and give them fresh meat to eat, but it won't be exactly like it was in the wild. I asked some people if after they watched *Tiger King* if they believe that cats have a bond with humans or if it's just because they are feeding the tiger. Kierra Setting believes that "the tigers are only connected with the humans due to the humans feeding the tiger." On the other hand Nikki Morton says, "I believe I saw an actual bond with the humans."

So this brings us back to the question: are tigers happy in captivity? Just because the tigers have a bond with humans, even if they actually do, that doesn't mean that the tigers are happy. While the tigers have their happy times when the human is around them that also leaves the time when they are all alone in a cage. The cage isn't going to ever completely simulate the

wild and it could leave the tiger bored. While we would hope the human stays with the tiger as much as possible, it still is alone. They will play with toys and such, but it's difficult for a tiger to be happy alone. People that own tigers also sometimes don't expect the tiger to cost a lot for it to be happy, which could leave the tiger hungry because whatever financial difficulty the owner is having the tiger will definitely be effected. Tigers are sadly very cheap on the market coming out to be around 900 dollars to 25,000 dollars. If someone impulse buys a tige,r this can leave the tiger in a bad life especially if the person didn't do their research. There is also the difficulty in the space the cage needs, the recommended cage by the AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums) is at least 40 ft. wide X 40 ft. deep, which is a lot of space. To just feed a tiger is 1,500 to 2,500 dollars a year on the horse meat and/or beef they need to eat.

The end result of our question is a tiger isn't truly happy in captivity and isn't a safe thing to buy. They have natural instincts and could snap at any moment and potentially kill you. The pet tiger doesn't want to have to be hungry or not fed right just because someone wanted to own the big cat. The tiger will most likely be very lonely and not stimulated by its surroundings and it is just not a healthy life for them. They are a wild animal that is a natural hunter and needs to walk very long distances that the cages just don't provide. So next time you watch *Tiger King* and want to own a big cat like he does, you should rethink your decision and think about the tiger's well being.