

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-002

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF SOUTHWEST RANCHES, FLORIDA, CREATING SECTION 3.4 OF THE TOWN'S CODE OF ORDINANCES ENTITLED "NON-NATIVE SPECIES PROTECTION ACT"; PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION IN THE TOWN'S CODE; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, due to the exotic pet trade many non-native species have been introduced to the Florida environment; and

WHEREAS, these species wreak havoc on Florida's ecosystems and natural habitats by preying on native species or competing with them for food resources; and

WHEREAS, a recent study led by University of Florida scientists identified one hundred (100) vertebrate species that have invaded Florida's natural environment with many of them causing devastating effects on Florida's delicate ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, many of these non-native species are considered a nuisance that cause damage such as the Nile Crocodile, Burmese Python, Nile Monitor, and Green Iguana, while some are less destructive and have become accepted members of the Florida natural environment including Egyptian Geese, Muscovy Ducks, and Peafowl; and

WHEREAS, Florida Statutes offers no protection against the killing of non-native species on public property so long as they are killed humanely; and

WHEREAS, recently several Muscovy Ducks were killed along a Southwest Ranches canal; and last year more than 30 Egyptian Geese were killed in Cooper City; and

WHEREAS, the Town seeks to create a distinction as to which non-native species may be killed humanely and offer protection to other non-native species that pose no significant threat to Florida's ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, any person found to kill non-native species outlined in Section 3.4 of the Code of Ordinances subjects any violators to prosecution in accordance with State law; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Southwest Ranches ("Town") finds extreme importance in protecting its animal community; and

WHEREAS, to help prevent the killing of protected non-native species, the Town Council desires to establish its own Non-Native Species Protection Act, where it will seek the maximum penalties allowed by law if such a violation ever occurs in the Town.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF SOUTHWEST RANCHES, FLORIDA:

Section 1. The foregoing "WHEREAS" clauses are true and correct and hereby ratified and confirmed by the Town Council.

Section 2. That a Section to the Town's Code entitled "Non-Native Species Protection Act" is hereby created to read as follows:

Section 3.4
Non-Native Species Protection Act.

A. In accordance with Section 828.12, Florida Statutes, as may be amended from time to time, a person who torments, deprives of necessary sustenance or shelter, or unnecessarily mutilates, or kills any animal, in a cruel or inhumane manner, commits animal cruelty, and is a misdemeanor of the first degree.

B. As Florida Statutes offers no protections to non-native species killed humanely, the Town desires to offer protection to certain specific non-native species from being killed on public property.

C. The following non-native species only are offered such protection: Egyptian Geese, Muscovy Ducks, and Peafowl.

D. A violation of this Section presents a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of our animal environment. The Town has found that a violation of this Section causes irreparable or irreversible harm, and as such, a violation of this Section shall be prosecuted to the fullest extent and in accordance with the highest civil penalties and maximum sentence afforded by law.

Section 3. Inclusion in the Code. This Ordinance shall be codified and included as part of the Town's Code of Ordinances. It is the intention of the Town Council that the provisions of this Ordinance shall become and be made a part of the Town of Southwest Ranches Code; and that the sections of this Ordinance may be renumbered or re-lettered and the word "ordinance" may be changed to "section," "article," or such other appropriate word or phrase in order to accomplish such intentions.

Section 4. Conflicts. All Ordinances or parts of Ordinances, Resolutions or parts of Resolutions in conflict herewith, be and the same are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict.

Section 5. Severability. If any word, phrase, clause, sentence or section of this Ordinance is for any reason held unconstitutional or invalid, the invalidity thereof shall not affect the validity of any remaining portions of this Ordinance.

Section 6. Effective Date. That this Ordinance shall become effective upon adoption on second reading.

PASSED ON FIRST READING this 22nd day of January 2026, on a motion by Council Member Kuczenski and seconded by Council Member Hartmann.

PASSED ON SECOND READING this 12th day of February 2026, on a motion made by V/m JABLONSKI and seconded by C/m KUCZENSKI.

Breitkreuz
Jablonski
Allbritton
Hartmann
Kuczenski

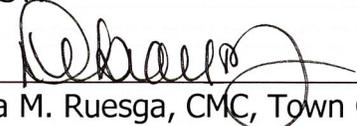
YES
YES
YES
YES
YES

Ayes
Nays
Absent
Abstaining

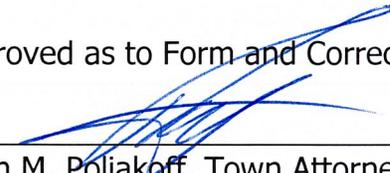
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Steve Breitkreuz, Mayor

ATTEST:


Debra M. Ruesga, CMC, Town Clerk

Approved as to Form and Correctness:


Keith M. Poliakoff, Town Attorney
1001.2026.009