

Bizarre Laws: International Edition

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Midnight Facts for Insomniacs

Podcast Transcript

**(Note: transcript consists
of episode outline)**

QUEENSLAND

I found an excellent and very informative document on the queensland.gov website, titled "Can I have a pet rabbit?" The short answer is no. A more accurate answer might be "hell no." Because Queensland is not fucking around when it comes to rabbit ownership. "The rabbit is a restricted invasive

animal under the Biosecurity Act of 2014. It must not be moved, kept, fed, given away, sold, or released into the environment." That covers pretty much everything you could ethically do with a rabbit. This is so crazy to me. If you come home one day and find a rabbit in your house, it's illegal to feed it or give it away or release it back into the environment. So according to the Queensland government, What do you do if you find a rabbit? "dispose of it." Of course the government recommends you do so in a legal and humane way, though none of those legal and humane methods are specified in the document. So basically, make it disappear. We don't wanna know how, we're not asking questions, this is the "don't ask don't tell" of rabbit disposal. It's the Barry White mentality. We don't wanna see no rabbit, we

don't wanna feel no rabbit. I will never get tired of misappropriating that song.

"Rabbits are Australia's most destructive agricultural and environmental introduced animal pest, costing up to \$1 billion annually.... There may be over 400 million wild rabbits in Australia today....They cause severe land degradation and soil erosion and threaten the survival of many rare and endangered native species." And apparently those are species more than we like rabbits. I love that we are just arbitrarily choosing which animals we want to sponsor in the hunger games of the Australian outback. "May the odds be forever in your favor, dingoes. Kill those rabbits."

You might ask, or at least this document anticipates you asking, "What if [the rabbit] is in a secure

enclosure
and desexed?"

"Trials elsewhere have not demonstrated that the desexing and registering of pets have been effective in reducing unwanted pet populations." Trials elsewhere. Not even trials in Queensland, we can't speak from experience, but we've been talking to some other rabbit neutering states, and trust me, you don't wanna end up like Victoria. They're wading through heaps of live rabbits, they're sleeping on beds of rabbits, they drive to work in cars made of rabbits. It's a dystopian lagomorph nightmare.

You might ask yourself, or at least this document implies that you will ask, "can I obtain a permit to own a rabbit?"

"A permit cannot be issued for keeping pet rabbits of any variety for any private

purpose."

Look, Give up on your rabbit owning dreams, alright? It's not gonna happen.

There's one exception.

Notice I said a permit cannot be issued for keeping pet rabbits for any *private* purpose. But what about public purposes? What if i want to share my rabbit with the world?

The Queensland government will make an exception and allow you to own a rabbit if you can prove that you are a magician. Or in a circus. Because when I go to the circus I damn well better see some circus rabbits. That's why I go. The famous circus staples: Elephants, trapeze, clowns and rabbits in tiny hats. I don't know what a circus rabbit is.

I love that the only people Australia deems responsible enough to own a rabbit are magicians and carnies.

Oh I forgot, there's one other

exception. You might ask yourself, "what if I want to subject my rabbit to dubious medical trials and animal experimentation?" Yeah, you can totally do that. Carve it up, flay it, whatever, just don't release it in the wild and don't Talk about it in public. Don't ask don't tell. Just make the rabbit disappear. Like a magician. Before we move on I want to highlight the heroic battles that Australia has waged against various firms of wildlife, as far as I can tell 100% unsuccessfully. We know about the emu war, but Queensland also attempted a poisoning campaign against rabbits, and when that failed they went full Great Wall of China by spending six years erecting a 2000 mile long, approximately three foot high fence to repel the rabbit hordes. As rabbits are capable of both jumping over short fences and

burrowing under them, the fence fared as almost as well as its predecessor, the 3,000 mile Australian dingo fence...which is to say, not well. Here's a betting tip: in any battle of Australia vs insert-animal-here, put your money on the animal.

UK

If a Sturgeon or a whale carcass washes ashore in England, it is not, as you might expect, a finders keepers situation. You can't just take home a whale carcass, as much as you might want to. Don't try to claim a lobster. But rather, Sturgeon and whale are defined as Royal Fish, and as such, they all officially belong to the queen of England. If you find a dead whale, you are legally required to offer it to the queen before you do whatever you do with a dead whale. Every once in a while

some fisherman gets 15 minutes of fame by publicly offering his catch to the queen. In 2004, a fisherman named Robert Davies caught a nine pound sturgeon and after informing the queen of his catch, was given permission to "use it as he saw fit." Which is weirdly vague. Maybe just sell it or eat it. So even if the royal family were to go bankrupt, the queen could survive by following sturgeon fisherman around and annexing their catch. Claim eminent domain over every whale carcass.

Tasmania

So in America, and I'm assuming much of the rest of the pet-loving world, you'll often see fliers posted on telephone poles and mailboxes seeking the return of a lost pet, and the owner will often specify "no

questions asked." But not in **Tasmania**. "A person shall not publicly advertise a reward for the return of any property which has been stolen or lost, and in such advertisement use any words intimating or purporting that no questions will be asked." In Tasmania you can post a notice seeking a lost item, but if that item is returned you better ask some questions. The government doesn't specify the questions so presumably you could be like, what's six times seven? What is the airspeed velocity of an unladen swallow? Technically I guess you could not ask any questions, but you just can't advertise that fact.

And the idea, I'm assuming, is to discourage theft. The cops don't want you to promise potential thieves that they won't face any questioning. Because most

criminals base the decision to commit a particular crime on whether some conversation might be involved. I was going to rob a bank, but what if someone in the bank is inquisitive?

Hardened criminals: notoriously terrified of questions. Brazen and unscrupulous enough to steal your property or a beloved pet, but not if any chit-chat is involved.

I guess like maybe a person who is on the fence about stealing a pet would see one of those signs and it would push them over the edge.

"I've had my eye on that poodle down the street for weeks, I bet I'd get a good reward, but I do fear the consequences...oh wait! No questions asked. How convenient." That's like *mildly* possible. But also, I think everyone knows that there's no law against lying on a flier. You could ask questions, even if you said

you wouldn't. You can post a flier that says, "kill the president, no questions asked," but it turns out a flier is not a legally enforceable contract. You can post a flier that says, "return my dog, I won't ask any questions," and then when they get there be like "psych." What's six times seven? I mean, what's the thief going to do? I guess they could get mad... Remember our stupid criminals episode? You might find a thief dumb enough to sue you. "He promised he wouldn't ask questions, your honor. I only stole that dog because I anticipated a question-free environment, as I am biologically unable to lie. I can steal everything in sight, but I cannot tell a lie. I'm like a kleptomaniac George Washington."

Personally I *like* seeing "no questions asked" on a flier, even as a non-thief, because I just don't want to talk to

people. If I find a lost dog I want to be like "here's your dog, you should probably keep better track of him, peace out." So it's not necessarily intended to let thieves off the hook, it might just be for antisocial jerks like me.

Singapore gum ban

This is a famous and famously misunderstood law: the Singapore chewing gum ban. First off, like in the United States when prohibition banned only the sale but not the consumption of alcohol, the act of chewing gum is not actually banned in Singapore...you just can't import or sell gum but you can still chew it. Technically. I would not test this loophole. This is Singapore, where they famously subject vandals to public caning. If you're walking up to cops

and blowing bubbles in their faces, I feel like there will be repercussions. If you want to chew gum in Singapore, just be discreet about it is all I'm saying. Or, you know, maybe just don't. We have zero Singaporean listeners, so if you're listening to this podcast you're not a resident, the most you're doing is visiting the place, so you're gonna be there for what, a few days? Deal with it. If you can't stop chewing gum for a few days, get help. part of the reason Singapore can't ban the chewing of gum altogether is because certain types of medically-beneficial gums are exempted: nicotine chewing gum, and anything for dental health that has been prescribed by a dentist. But good luck convincing a cop that you were prescribed that purple bubblicious double bubble or whatever. The law was first implemented in 1982, and I

had always assumed it was because of the hygiene and littering aspects, people spitting gum on the streets and putting it under public movie theater seats or whatever, but that's only part of the rationale. The ban actually has a really specific origin story. The mass rapid transit system in Singapore was implemented in 1987, it was a huge \$5 billion project, and as with any massive government infrastructure program, teenagers immediately found cheap ways to sabotage it. vandals quickly figured out that they could mess with the function of the door sensors by sticking chewing gum on top of them, causing the doors to go haywire. It was a huge pain in the ass, and it cost a ton of money, and it was the final straw that led to the nationwide ban. But cleanliness definitely was a factor: Singapore is

notoriously draconian with their littering, vandalism, and cleanliness laws. There are undercover police officers who will verify that you've flushed a public toilet (there's a job) and ever since the 1990s there have been sensors in many Singaporean elevators that detect urine, and will lock a perpetrator in the elevator until the police arrive if a urination event is suspected. I like that they lock you in the elevator with your pee. "Just sit there and stare at that puddle and think about what you've done." But the Singaporean streets are incredibly clean, so as usual it all comes down to a trade off of cleanliness and security for freedom. Do you want stinky, piss-soaked freedom or sparkling draconian cleanliness? San Francisco has made his choice. It's just testing. I grew up there, I will always have affection for the city, it

will always be a cesspool.
Hopefully not always. But at
least the foreseeable future.

Germany: Running out of gas on the Autobahn

If you're driving in Germany,
stock up on fuel, because
it's illegal to run out of gas
on the autobahn. You find
this one on a lot of "weird
laws" lists, but I don't know.
is it really that weird?

Stopping on the freeway is
always illegal, and it's illegal
in Germany to pull over to
the side of the road unless
there's an emergency. And
running out of gas isn't an
emergency, it's a
preventable circumstance.
Seems reasonable. They
have criminalized being a
dumbass. Cars need gas. I'm
good with punishing people
for being dumb. Because
running out of gas is not
dumb in an intellectual

sense, I don't want to punish people for being intellectually challenged, it's dumb in the sense of being irresponsible. You ran out of gas like a dumbass, here's a ticket. Now if you ran out of gas because you couldn't afford gas, and then you get a ticket, I guess that sucks. Seems rare, though.

Canada

I don't know about you, but I've never thought of Canada as an inhospitable, nationalistic, protectionist dystopia, but I'm viewing our neighbors to the north in a much more skeptical light ever since starting this podcast. It started with the Ogopogo. That's a second rate Cryptid, and the ogopogo song was terrible. We do have an insomniac on the case, there is a fan of the show who lives near the

lake and has been keep us updated. In comic fox is stalking the wily oingo boingo. But now I'm judging Canada for their legal system. So there is a whole subset of laws in the great white north known as "Canadian content laws." Television and radio broadcasters in Canada have to give preferential treatment to Canadian media productions. That means that a large proportion of content must be created, written, and produced by Canadians. "Parliament believes that it is important that the broadcasting system in Canada gives voice to the talents and shared experiences of Canadians in order to preserve our culture and identity." Preserve our culture and identity is some scary ethno nationalist propaganda language. And how is this law actually supporting Canadian culture

and identity? Because nothing in the law says that the programming has to do that. The law doesn't dictate content. Nothing in the laws says your TV show has to include maple syrup and cheese curds and hockey and Céline Dion. those are of course stereotypes and I have no idea if they're racist or whatever—can you even BE racist against Canadians? But the point is that If you're a Canadian tv station you could conceivably air a program 24/7 that consists of a guy bitching about how Canada is the worst country on earth...you just have to make sure that it's a Canadian doing the bitching and a Canadian behind the camera and a Canadian writing the script about how much Canada sucks, and you're meeting the requirements of the law. So it has nothing to do with protecting Canadian culture and everything to do with

money and jobs. Protecting culture is always a weird, slippery slope. Plus, can you imagine if America made it a law that a certain proportion of United States productions had to somehow reflect American culture and identity? Just hours of overweight midwesterners yelling at Uber drivers and fighting in an Arby's. ... jerry springer, that's American culture. We turned the Cash me outside girl into a millionaire, our culture is trash. So fully 35% of songs on Canadian radio have to be by Canadian artists, and 55% of tv in Canada has to be predominantly homemade. I now understand the joke behind Wayne's World. If you're a Canadian TV broadcaster, you've gotta meet your quota, and there are going to be months where you have some great Canadian productions and other times where you just take what

you can get. so it's like "we are now taking a short break from the Simpson's marathon to present three dudes ice fishing." That is some anti competitive bullshit. It's also a sign of low confidence...like you're basically admitting that your music and tv shows can't compete on a level playing field with the media from other countries. And I understand that there are budget considerations... you're not going to be able to outspend America when it comes to Hollywood and LA production companies. Except this law was passed in 1991, so it's not they were competing with Game of thrones. 1991. Take a guess: what was the most popular American television show of 1991? Maybe, I don't remember, I looked this up, and I still don't know what it was, because my brain rejected the memory. Because that's how not

memorable the TV shows of 1991 are. I know Full House was in the top ten. If the only way you can compete with full house is through legislation, you shouldn't be in the content creation business.

A big problem now is that these laws only apply to legacy media, meaning cable television and radio. Netflix is currently exempt. Which is pissing off Canadian tv stations. But can you imagine Canada trying to tell Netflix that half of their movies have to be Canadian. How many Canadian movies are there? I guess I should say, how many *good* Canadian movies are there? Strange Brew

Saint Kitts

We've talked a lot on this podcast about free-speech and censorship issues, and how we have sort of

conflicting beliefs on the subject. But for anyone complaining about how America is becoming a fascist dictatorship because people are getting canceled and you can't throw up a nazi salute in public like in the good old days, well, it could be worse. One thing both liberals and conservatives can agree on is that they both love to tell each other to fuck off and imply horrible things about each other's mothers. But that's not an option in the Caribbean island of Saint Kitts, where public profanity is against the law. And we can all agree that's a step too darn That's my nightmare. like people have actually complained about the amount of swearing on our podcast, but understand, this is us on our absolute best behavior. Swearing for me is punctuation. In 2016, rapper 50 Cent apparently thought

he was above the law, but all the Cristal in the world won't save you from The Saint Kitts profanity police. Fitty was arrested after a vulgar concert and forced to pay a fine of \$1100. Which is probably the amount of pocket change in the seats of his Lambo. And this is why the legal system worldwide is not fair. Not only do rich people get all the perks and luxuries, they can afford to swear anywhere on earth. I would have to budget for daily conversations in Saint Kitts. You know how people have a swear jar? This is the ultimate swear jar. DMX was also fined for a Saint kits performance, but I didn't bring that up because, sad. Not sure if you know, DMX passed away recently. I guess I just brought it up. Oh well. Why do these rappers keep performing in Saint Kitts? I guess because they can afford the fine. But why

does Saint kits keep allowing rap performances? If you're going to ban swearing, shouldn't you just ban rap music? And like half of the artists from every other music genre? Only Elton John and Barry Manilow are authorized to play Saint Kitts.

Drunken cow riding in Scotland

Oshawa Ontario tree laws

No strip clubs in Iceland

Switzerland

I love Switzerland so much. What's not to love? Skiing and hot chocolate and military neutrality, but the best thing about Switzerland? Not a single lonely guinea pig. The guinea pigs of Switzerland are pampered and paired, or even grouped, but never isolated. It is illegal to own

just one guinea pig in Switzerland. Because guinea pigs are social animals. So what do you do if you have a pair of guinea pigs and one of them passes away? There is actually services available that allow you to rent guinea pigs to keep your big guinea pig company. I'm not sure why that's legal, it seems like being alone sucks but also constantly being tossed in a new cage with a new strange guinea pig that is grieving it's lost buddy is probably mentally taxing as well. You're like a grievance counselor guinea pig

Switzerland is actually incredibly progressive when it comes to animal rights. They're not standing for any tiger king bullshit in Switzerland. The law forbids "the keeping of animals which are extremely difficult to look after unless a recognized specialist certifies that all the

requirements for their proper keeping have been met.

[this] shall apply to the following species in particular:

a. duck-billed platypus, koala bears, flying lemurs, giant armadillos; divers, grebes, gannets, frigate birds, secretary birds, great bustards, terns, auks and guillemots, swifts, marine iguanas, chameleons, goliath frogs, pelagic sharks. and probably tigers, I think those went without saying.

They even have laws about transporting animals, which I love

"Animals shall not be transported unless they can be expected to withstand the journey without harm."

This one's a little tough, because you might not be able to take your cat to the vet. Cats are traumatized by every car ride. The law continues, "Only competent

persons shall be allowed to drive, herd, load and unload animals." I'm not sure who's in charge of determining animal-loading competence, but i'm glad that's a thing. "You are not qualified to herd animals." If you can't even qualify to be a shepherd, you need to work on your résumé. So what do I have to do, stand around in a field with a stick and look at sheep all day? Yeah, I don't know if I can handle that level of responsibility. Is there an assistant shepherd program? I'll be a shepherd's secretary."

I really combed through the Swiss animal guidelines.

This was a solid afternoon for me. Animal comfort is a priority in Switzerland.

"Lactating dairy cattle shall be milked twice a day."

Seems good. Again, I'm not sure who is in charge of auditing cow tits, but I support the effort.

Even animals kept for testing need to have sufficient "methods to limit pain, suffering, injury or distress for each single animal;

In addition to vertebrates, the regulations concerning experiments with animals also comprise decapoda and cephalopoda." So don't think there's some kind of crab and squid loophole, Revlon. You're not testing your mascara on MY octopus.

Thanks, Switzerland.

www6.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/tas/consol_act/poa1935140/s41.html

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