



IMPORT & KEEPING OF EXOTIC ANIMALS IN EU

Existing concerns and risks - Current challenges to meet

Brussels, 4-5 October 2012

BENEFITS AND RISKS RELATED TO THE IMPORT AND KEEPING OF EXOTIC ANIMALS

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OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
July-December 2012**

DEFINITIONS

- ❖ *“Non-native (or alien) animal”*: An animal that is not a native to the country or ecosystem to which it could be intentionally or unintentionally introduced (OIE)
- ❖ *“Domesticated species”*: Species in which the evolutionary process has been influenced by humans to meet their needs (Convention on Biological Diversity)
 - *Domesticated VS Non-domesticated species*

INTRODUCTION (1)

- ❖ *The EU is one of the largest wildlife consumer markets worldwide alongside the USA and Japan*
(TRAFFIC Europe)
- ❖ A great unknown number of exotic / non-domesticated species of animals are kept either in specific facilities or by private owners
- ❖ The number of animals kept (especially by private owners) is much greater and also unknown

INTRODUCTION (2)

- ❖ *Where exotic animals are kept / found*
 - *Zoos*
 - *Circuses*
 - *Other Bodies, Institutes or Centres (e.g. laboratories, animal sanctuaries, etc)*
 - *Dedicated facilities / Holdings (farms)*
 - *Pet shops / Pet trade facilities*
 - *Private animal collections*
 - *In the domestic environment as pets*
 - *In the natural environment (invasive alien species)*

INTRODUCTION (3)

- ❖ *Lack of EU harmonized approach (regulatory framework / set of standards / guidelines) covering the whole spectrum of trade and keeping of exotic animals with regard to animal health, animal welfare, identification and registration of animals and public health and safety*
- ❖ *Lack of knowledge, information, resources, facilities, ...*

BENEFITS RELATED TO THE IMPORT AND KEEPING OF EXOTIC ANIMALS (1)

- ❖ *Ex-situ conservation, captive breeding , reintroduction of endangered species (e.g. via programmes such as the European Endangered Species Programme - EEP)*
 - *Mostly zoos and other dedicated facilities*
 - *Supplementary to in-situ conservation*
 - *Effort needed to maintain genetic diversity*

BENEFITS RELATED TO THE IMPORT AND KEEPING OF EXOTIC ANIMALS (2)

- ❖ *Acquisition of knowledge about the species (input from hobbyists)*
- ❖ *Maintenance of genetic diversity (preservation of gene pools)*
- ❖ *Use for scientific / education purposes*
 - *Consideration of the principles of replacement, reduction and refinement*

BENEFITS RELATED TO THE IMPORT AND KEEPING OF EXOTIC ANIMALS (3)

- ❖ *Satisfaction to the owners (improved quality of life)*
- *Certain species may be more suitable / easier to keep in some occasions (e.g. low maintenance species)*
- *Depends on the needs of both the human and the animal*
- *Responsible ownership*

RISKS RELATED TO THE IMPORT AND KEEPING OF EXOTIC ANIMALS (1)

❖ *Biological diversity*

- *Population decline in natural habitats (wild-caught animals)*
- *Collateral damage to non-target species (destruction of natural habitats, use of indiscriminate means of capture)*
- *Environmental consequences due to invasive alien species*
- *Loss of genetic diversity due to breeding & inbreeding for specific traits*

RISKS RELATED TO THE IMPORT AND KEEPING OF EXOTIC ANIMALS (2)

❖ Animal & human health

- Possible transmission of diseases to livestock (direct or indirect exposure)*
- Zoonotic diseases (e.g. Rabies, Salmonellosis, Monkeypox, Hepatitis A, Herpesvirus simiae-B, Psittacosis, Tuberculosis)*
- Lack of harmonized health and/or identification requirements for the (commercial or not) movement of some categories of animals (e.g. reptiles, amphibia)*

RISKS RELATED TO THE IMPORT AND KEEPING OF EXOTIC ANIMALS (3)

- ❖ *Animal & human safety*
 - *Dangerous / hazardous animals*
 - *Inappropriate (not safe) facilities*
 - *Inexperienced keepers*
 - *Escape / release of the animals (accidental or intentional)*

RISKS RELATED TO THE IMPORT AND KEEPING OF EXOTIC ANIMALS (4)

❖ *Animal welfare*

- *Lack of knowledge / expertise in the handling and care of exotic animals (owners, traders, transporters, veterinarians, competent authorities)*
- *Lack of available and reliable information in the husbandry of many exotic species*
- *Inadequate dissemination of the existing information*

RISKS RELATED TO THE IMPORT AND KEEPING OF EXOTIC ANIMALS (5)

- *Abandonment / euthanasia when the animal is not wanted anymore, has lost its novelty, has grown in size or its maintenance is higher than expected*
- *Lack of suitable facilities for the keeping of confiscated / released animals (zoos not always willing to accept them or don't have specific facilities, sanctuaries overstocked or not existing)*
- *Increased mortality (especially in wild - caught animals)*

RISKS RELATED TO THE IMPORT AND KEEPING OF EXOTIC ANIMALS (6)

- *Inappropriate capture, transport and handling practices resulting to increased morbidity and mortality*
- *Inappropriate keeping conditions by the owners not satisfying the physiological and ethological needs of the animals*

RISKS RELATED TO THE IMPORT AND KEEPING OF EXOTIC ANIMALS (7)

❖ *Economic impact*

- *Control programmes for invasive alien species*
- *Control / eradication programmes for livestock diseases*

Thank you!

