



Report of the 276th Session

Thursday 27th October 2011, 9.30 - 10.30 hrs
Room LOW N 3.2 – European Parliament, Brussels

I. Introductory remarks

Postponement of election

The Chairman, **Carl Schlyter**, (Greens/EFA, SE) announced that due to the lack of simultaneous translation the planned elections of Michèle Striffler (EPP, FR) as new Vice-President would have to be postponed to the November meeting.

Animal transport

In response to a leaked Commission report on the impact of Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport, which is expected to be published on the 10th November 2011, the Chairman said that together with Dan Jørgensen (S&D, DK) he was planning to prepare a written declaration calling for a transport limit of eight hours for all animals destined for slaughter.

Roger Helmer (ECR, UK) agreed that the Animal Transport Regulation needed to be improved, but pointed out that the current legislation is badly enforced.

The Chairman continued that Eurogroup for Animals has produced a report showing the massive number of violations to EU rules in the majority EU Member States. Even if detected, the lack of enforcement has often no consequences for those who breach the law. He said that many violations are occurring when animals are rested on staging points during long journeys. If the transport times were reduced, the resting times would not be necessary and the majority of violations would cease to take place. He clarified that the planned written declaration would call for new legislation.

Catherine Bearder (ALDE, UK) reported about some recent sheep transports from Ireland to the UK which had been carried out without respecting EU rules. Also **Jörg Leichtfried** (S&D, AT) stressed that many Member States would not properly enforce the legislation and that there was an evident lack of official controls.

The Chairman replied that each Member State is required to report its controls to the Commission. Some have very few controls but high detection rates, and vice versa.

Dan Jørgensen (S&D, DK) suggested to his Member colleagues to write to their national Ministers pointing on the lack of enforcement of the current legislation. In many countries, Ministers would be happy to see better implementation and to have stronger legislation. He announced that the petition www.8hours.eu/8hours has reached more than 800.000 signatures.

The Chairman announced that animal transport would be discussed in more detail during the Intergroup meeting on 17 November.

II. Health Risks from New Companion Animals

Staci McLennan, Wildlife Policy Officer at Eurogroup for Animals, was pleased to be there for the launch of the *Report on health risks from new companion animals*¹.

This report by Dr. Praud and Dr. Moutou, two French veterinarians & epidemiologists, is a literature review on documented health risks from wild animals being kept as pets.

Bureau Members

President:

Carl Schlyter MEP

Vice-Presidents:

Kriton Arsenis MEP

Jacqueline Foster MEP

Nadja Hirsch MEP

Elisabeth Jeggle MEP

Dan Jørgensen MEP

Jörg Leichtfried MEP

Kartika Liotard MEP

David Martin MEP

Cristiana Muscardini MEP

Sirpa Pietikäinen MEP

Raül Romeva i Rueda MEP

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Established in 1983

nals.org/files/publications/downloads/Zoonotic-risk-report.pdf

The report provides an introduction to the growing popularity of keeping wild animals as pets and identifies zoonotic risks from groups of mammals and reptiles. It concludes with recommendations to reduce these risks.

Zoonotic diseases can be transmitted between animals and humans. 60% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic and of those over 70% originate in wildlife. Some noteworthy examples include SARS, HIV/AIDS and the Ebola virus. The number of emerging infectious disease events linked to wildlife have increased significantly over time and represent a serious global health threat. Globalisation is certainly playing a role in this increasing threat. Species are being introduced to new areas of the world at an unprecedented rate due to the increased volume, speed and intensity of trade, transport and tourism. This means diseases can travel very quickly, posing serious public health, development and economic concerns.

The very conditions under which animals are transported can help spread disease, as species can be co-mingled animals with other animals, and the confined and stressful conditions during transport can weaken their immune systems making them more susceptible to disease. Additionally, the duration of transport can also be shorter than the incubation period so that the signs of disease may not be detected until after transportation when an animal arrives at a pet shop or in a home.

When discussing about risks, it is important to consider the vast scale of wildlife trade as millions of wild animals are traded annually and only a portion is regulated. CITES regulates the trade in 5000 threatened animal species but many animals, particularly reptiles and amphibians are not CITES listed. Pet traders in Europe have estimated that nearly 10.000 species of animals are kept as pets. This means at least 5000 species of animals are part of the unregulated trade.

While the EU has health requirements for the import of live animals, only certain species groups have specific health requirements and this emphasis has mostly been on farm animals and non-commercial import of pet animals such as cats, dogs and ferrets. There are few specific requirements for wildlife with the exception of birds where the trade in wild-caught animals has been banned due to threats from avian flu.

When animals arrive at Border Inspection Points veterinary checks can range from checking the health certificate only to a clinical exam of the animal, but this does not mean every animal is examined or that diagnostic health tests are conducted.

Besides the health risks to humans and to other animal species concerns include **species conservation** and the role of trade in depleting wild populations. Biodiversity can be lost from the introduction of invasive species. **The welfare of the animals** and the fact that wild **animals are unsuitable to life as a pet** should not be overlooked. The growing diversity of exotic animals as pets raises concern over the **availability of veterinary care** with appropriate expertise. A further problem is what to do with confiscated animals and those **pets that are unwanted or abandoned by owners**. There is a lack of specialised shelters and in many cases euthanasia is the only option.

A few examples of zoonotic cases with wild pets.

Primates represent a higher health risk due to their genetic similarity to humans. Researchers at the Primatology Centre of Strasbourg have noted that Barbary macaques, primates from North Africa, which are illegally imported to Europe, are often accompanied by a rabies vaccination certificate. These primates are being given the rabies vaccine intended for domestic dogs and cats which is unsuitable for primates and has resulted in cases of “accidental” contamination.

This is concerning as illegal trade in this species mostly happens via European tourists travelling to Morocco. Stichting AAP in the Netherlands has received requests to take in over 200 confiscated and rescued macaques over the last 5 years.

Even **bats** are showing up in the exotic pet market. An Egyptian fruit bat sold in a French pet shop died 2 months later of rabies. Authorities then needed to trace all contacts of the animal resulting in 130 people being vaccinated against rabies and all the animals the fruit bat had potential contact with during its time in France were euthanized.

The threat of wildlife disease and impacts at the farm animal and human interface has also to be considered. A prime example is a case occurred in Malaysia in late 90's where pig farms located within natural habitat of fruit bats led to the introduction of the Nipah virus in the high density pig population and facilitated transmission of the virus to humans. Over 1 million pigs were culled and over 100 humans died as a result.

Salmonellosis is the most important zoonosis transmitted by **reptiles** in terms of frequency and severity. In humans, salmonellosis occurs as a form of food poisoning with fever and gastroenteritis. The infection is usually more severe in vulnerable groups including children, pregnant women, the elderly and immunocompromised individuals. 90% of captive reptiles are healthy carriers of Salmonella. Cases of salmonellosis have been reported in individuals, including infants, who have not had direct contact with reptiles but live in a household where the animal is kept as a pet. Risk does not require direct contact of the person with animal. After a large number of salmonella cases in children linked to pet turtles the US banned sale of small turtles that children are more likely to treat as toys and put in their mouths. Now that many other reptiles are common in the pet trade there has been a rise in salmonella cases in children again.

Eurogroup's report does not include **amphibians**. However, millions of these animals are traded each year for pets. Starting in 2009, US health officials began investigating an ongoing nationwide outbreak of human *Salmonella* Typhimurium that was eventually associated with African dwarf frogs. Reports of sick individuals have occurred in over 40 US States. The outbreak was traced back to frogs from a captive-breeding facility in California from which trade continues.

Health risk for native fauna

Exotic animals can also pose a health risk for native fauna. A well known example has been the introduction to the UK of the **grey squirrel**, a healthier carrier of squirrelpox which is fatal to native **red squirrels**. The unregulated trade in amphibians has been linked to dramatic population declines and even extinctions from the spread of the chytrid fungus and ranavirus, both of which are notifiable diseases according to the World Organisation for Animal Health, yet there are no EU restrictions on imports.

Recommendations

The overall goal should be a reduction in the trade of wild animals and the establishment of measures to prevent health risks. Consumer protection is vitally important. There is a great need to educate prospective & current pet owners of health and ecological risks & special welfare needs of wild animals. Impulsive purchases in pet shops and by poorly informed tourists illustrate that few prospective owners consider the difficulties associated with the proper care and humane keeping of animals. Consequently, unsuspecting parents purchase pet reptiles for their children without realising the potential health risks.

Measures should also be taken to protect the welfare of animals by setting restrictions on the types of animals which may be kept as pets and this should include prohibitions on keeping wild animals.

Efforts should be made to assess species in trade for health & ecological risks.

Based on species risk assessments sanitary measures should be established with screening procedures or even prohibitions on the import of certain groups.

The **Chairman** asked to have a list of the regulations on health requirements for exotic pets in the EU Member States.

III. Invasive Alien Species and an EU Strategy

Valentina Bastino, DG Environment – Biodiversity Unit, European Commission, gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation which is available on the Intergroup website². She stressed that the increase in invasive species

² <http://www.animalwelfareintergroup.eu/meetings/>

is a real threat to biodiversity which costs the EU €12 billion a year. EU targets closely match those agreed in Nagoya at the COP 10 summit. **The animal health regime and plant health regime will be reviewed in 2012.** The Commission is trying to widen the scope of its animal related regulations. She clarified that the aim is to tackle only those 10-15% of all alien species which are invasive. She stressed that any Commission action would probably not be very successful if not backed by strong information campaigns for the public and traders etc. In terms of exotic animals and the Invasive Alien Species (IAS) initiative, the Commission is still in the phase of collecting information and ideas and is thus open for suggestions and contributions.

IV. INTERPOL's Response to the Threat of Organised Wildlife Crime

Justin Gosling, Intelligence Officer for the Environmental Crime Programme of INTERPOL³, gave some introductory remarks about his organization which facilitates international police cooperation. Its membership of 189 countries provides finance of around €59 million through annual contributions. The organization's headquarters is in Lyon, France. It is the second largest intergovernmental organisation after the United Nations in terms of number of Member States.

INTERPOL's activities include also the fight against wildlife crime. Its **Wildlife Crime Working Group** initiates and leads a number of projects to combat the poaching, trafficking, or possession of legally protected fauna and flora. The Working Group which employs just 7 people covering 189 countries brings together specialized criminal investigators from around the world to work on project-based activities on an international level. INTERPOL encourages also the participation from environmental experts across the world in order to maximize the global impact of current projects and to devise new initiatives. The overarching aim is to identify ways and methods to improve the flow and exchange of information between wildlife enforcement agencies, INTERPOL National Central Bureaus and the INTERPOL General Secretariat. Wildlife crime undermines any legislations and restrictions in place on wildlife trade. A big concern is the impact on regional security, with criminals becoming very wealthy and powerful. Wildlife trade is a high profit business with low risk of criminal prosecution. A single tiger can bring \$100,000 and a rhinoceros horn costs €50,000 a kilo. He emphasised over the last 30 years wildlife crime had been tackled with in the wrong way being more reactive than proactive.

INTERPOL coordinated initiatives

Operation RAMP

This initiative co-ordinated by INTERPOL took place in 51 countries across five continents against the illegal trade in reptiles and amphibians. It has resulted in arrests worldwide as well as the seizure of thousands of animals and illicit products worth more than €25 million.

Operation TRAM

This initiative has targeted the illegal trade in traditional medicines containing protected wildlife products. It resulted in a series of arrests worldwide and

Border control is the main course of action against wildlife trade, but when captured wild animals reach the borders, the damage has already been done. The animals are very often in bad shape or even dead and often cannot be returned to their natural habitats. There is a need to focus action against wildlife pushers who control the trade and make most of the profit from this business.

He listed some possible solutions like issuing or improving legislation and regulations, effective enforcement of the rules, tackling corruption, the formation of multiagency units.

Better exchange of information will be essential in future. Many countries are currently not sharing valuable information with INTERPOL.

³ <http://www.animalwelfareintergroup.eu/meetings/>

V. IFAW's role in combating wildlife crime

Adrian Hiel, Communications Officer at the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), spoke about IFAW's initiatives to combat wildlife crime. IFAW believes that international commercial trade in wildlife products is a major cause of species extinction and cruelty to individual animals. They work with the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to help control this. IFAW also cooperate directly with many countries in the world, to train anti-poaching rangers and customs officials and collaborates with law enforcement agencies. It conducts campaigns to stop the trade in elephant ivory, as well as souvenirs and traditional medicines that contain animal parts.

IFAW's external funding allows the co-financing of many wildlife conservation initiatives. The organisation works also closely with the Wildlife Crime Working Group of INTERPOL.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare sees wildlife trade both as an animal welfare and conservation issue. Concerning the animal welfare aspect Adrien Hiel reported about horrific and inhumane practices with seized animals on borders. On an Egyptian border, when asked what had happened to some seized monkeys, they responded to have killed them by dropping them into buckets of acid.

Poaching is a huge issue in terms of conservation. He reported that Vietnamese authorities have recently seized one tonne of elephant ivory from Africa that was being transported on a river bordering Vietnam and China. This is only a small fraction of ivory from the Congo where record elephant poaching has been carried out this year.

Questions and debate

Catherine Bearder (ALDE, UK) had been told that DNA on elephant tusks could be traced back to poachers and traders, and so asked if anyone was doing this.

Adrian Hiel (IFAW) replied that it was done only sometimes as this identification technique is still very expensive. IFAW is working with an American specialist on this issue, to make the technique more affordable and easier to apply.

Justin Gosling (INTERPOL) said that lots of data are collected on wildlife trade, but who is carrying out the crime remains often undiscovered. Getting hold of the mobile phones of traders, could help identifying wider circles. He raised the funding issue, and told the assembly that at the last INTERPOL summit, there had been a unanimous vote allowing countries to help by seconding staff. This has been done so far by the Netherlands and Brazil.

VI. Closing remarks

The next Intergroup meeting will be held on Thursday 17th November 2011 from 10.00-11.00 hrs in the room, LOW N3.2 and will focus on animal transport. Detailed information will be sent out in time.

ATTENDANCE**Members of the European Parliament (12)**

Bearder, Catherine	ECR	UK
de Lange, Esther	EPP	NL
Gustafsson, Mikael	EUL/NGL	SE
Helmer, Roger	ECR	UK
Jørgensen, Dan (Vice-President)	S&D	DK
Leichtfried Jörg (Vice-President)	S&D	AT
Martin, David (Vice-President)	S&D	UK
Paulsen, Marit (Honorary Secretary)	ALDE	SE
Rosbach, Anna	ECR	DK
Sârbu, Daciana (Vice-President)	S&D	RO
Schlyter, Carl (President)	Greens/EFA	SE
Zanoni, Andrea	EPP	IT

Assistants and Trainees to Members of the European Parliament (12)

Bono, Joseph	Assistant to Mr Helmer (ECR, UK)
Brussel, Rinke	Assistant to Mr Gerbrandy (ALDE, NL)
Carter, Robert	Assistant to an MEP
Cummings, John	Assistant to Ms Sârbu (S&D, RO)
Faloci, Chiara	Assistant to Mr Zanoni (EPP, IT)
Fiala, Judith	Assistant to Mr Leichtfried (S&D, AT)
Hendickx, Mieke	Assistant to Mrs Bearder (ALDE, UK)
Hiriart, Sandra	Assistant to Ms Striffler (EPP, FR)
Kerr, Laura	Assistant to Ms Foster (ECR, UK)
Matikainen, Laura	Assistant to Ms Pietikainen (EPP, FI)
Pahlen, Marita	Assistant to Mr Schlyter (Greens/EFA, SE)
Sergo, Leida	Assistant to Ms Paulsen (ALDE, SE)

Guest Speakers and Observers (11)

Jackson, Joana	DODS
Lamaison, Melanie	EBCD
Simons, Despina	EBCD
Miczki, Tamara	EP staff
Timofte, Alina	European Commission, DG SANCO
Chehlarova, Rada	European Commission, DG SANCO,
Bastino, Valentina	European Commission; DG Environment,
Hiel, Adrien	IFAW EU office
Pirnay, James	IFAW EU office
Gosling Justin	INTERPOL
Aavo, Anna	PRAO

Intergroup Secretariat (2)

Erler, Andreas	Eurogroup for Animals, Political Officer,
McLennan, Staci	Eurogroup for Animals, Policy Officer Wildlife