

BVA and BVZS position statement on the importation of wild reptiles and amphibians into the EU for the pet trade

Issue

Veterinary professionals play a vital role in maximising health and welfare provision for all captive exotic species. Consequently, BVA and BVZS are concerned about the impact of the worldwide trade in wild caught reptiles and amphibians on animal welfare¹.

Key Concerns

The major issue associated with such trade is regarded as:

- The welfare of the animals in captivity and during transportation

Other concerns relate to:

- The impact on the health of native species and ecosystems if they escape (spread of disease, predation etc)
- Unsustainable harvest of wild amphibians and reptiles

The impact on the health of native species and ecosystems if they escape

The welfare and health of reptiles and amphibians removed directly from the wild, packed and shipped overseas are generally recognised to be seriously compromised by the process and losses and suffering are significant.

A number of exotic reptiles and amphibians have become established as invasive species in other countries, with serious effects on native species and ecosystems. Trade in wild caught amphibians has also spread diseases around the world which have had a devastating effect on amphibians.

The majority of reptile and amphibian species do not enjoy the protection of robust CITES listing and, in many cases, their conservation status is insufficiently known. Therefore the effects of continued uncontrolled collection on a large scale, on the reptile and amphibian populations and welfare, are rarely monitored.

Proposed action to address concerns

BVA and BVZS believe that these problems could be substantially reduced through:

¹ BVA and BVZS are calling for research (via a related joint holding statement) into the implications of the capture and trade of exotic animals - other than amphibians and reptiles - for welfare, local economies and the environment.

- The European Union taking a lead by banning the import into the EU of wild caught reptiles and amphibians intended to be sold as pets
- Preventing any illegal trade through robust enforcement of current legislation, including animal welfare legislation
- Meeting the legitimate demand for these species as private pets using captive-bred stock available within the EU
- Introducing a caveat to allow certain wild caught species to be taken into captivity by zoos or authenticated specialist private breeders for purposes of conservation – when justified
- RCVS and EAEVE requiring effective teaching of exotic animal medicine and welfare in all EU veterinary universities
- Encouraging the UK pet industry to provide effective and consistent welfare and husbandry advice at point of sale