



# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE PUBLIC HEALTH VETERINARIANS, INC.

CSTE ANNUAL MEETING

CSTE POSITION STATEMENT 1998-ID 17

COMMITTEE: Infectious Diseases

TITLE: Maintenance of Non-Human Primates as Pets

ISSUE: Non human primates (NHP) are wild, exotic animals that impact public health because of their potential to transmit zoonotic diseases and inflict severe injuries. In 1975, in response to the public health issues, the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) adopted a regulation defining the legitimate uses of NHP in the United States and prohibiting the importation and distribution of NHP for “pets, hobby, or an avocation with occasional display to the public” (USPHS Foreign Quarantine regulation CFR 71.53). NHP imported prior to the October 10, 1975 regulation, and the offspring of a pair which were both imported before 1975, were considered legitimately “grandfathered” as pets. In the regulation, clear definitions are given for bonafide uses of NHP for educational, scientific, and exhibition purposes. Despite this regulation, a lucrative, and largely unregulated commerce in NHP as pets is thriving in the United States.

POSITION TO BE ADOPTED: NASPHV/ CSTE recommends that a working group consisting of representatives from the Division of Quarantine, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Center for Infectious Disease’s (NCID) Zoonoses Working Group, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the National Institute of Health (NIH), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) be formed with goals of:

- 1) assessing the current level of federal regulations concerning NHP across agencies, as to their scope, purposes, enforcement responsibilities, and definitions
- 2) developing and implementing methods to restrict the pet trade in NHP
- 3) enforcing institutional responsibility in maintaining lifelong care of NHP in their jurisdiction
- 4) monitoring and assuring legitimacy and safety of interstate movements and redistributions of NHP

5) developing a federal requirement for permanent identification of all NHP in USDA licensed facilities in the United States (tattoo/ microchip) with a centralized comprehensive central database

6) the collection of more data about incidents and numbers of NHP outside of CDC registered institutions.

NASPHV/CSTE recommends federal and state legislation prohibiting:

- 1) private ownership of NHP
- 2) future commerce in NHP for the pet trade.
- 3) privately owned “grandfathered” NHP:
  - from all public areas or in any type of exhibition (except in transport to a veterinary facility, or during legal transport).
  - from breeding

**BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION:** Monkeys and apes are bought and sold, taken into public places including schools, parks, and shopping centers, and maintained in private ownership in most states. Health department and animal control officials are often consulted after bites and injuries occur. Medical assessment of these exposures requires special attention due to the potential for highly fatal and rare zoonoses, severe injuries, and serious wound related infections.

Zoonoses, some highly fatal and others with unknown human risk consequences, such as Herpes B virus, simian immunodeficiency virus, and ebola viruses have been transmitted from infected NHP to humans. There are no licensed vaccines or medical treatments to prevent or protect NHP from contracting these diseases. Furthermore, because of the close genetic relationship of humans and NHP, there is potential for interspecies exchange of a wide spectrum of disease causing organisms. Anthrozoonotic disease transmission of many common enteric and respiratory pathogens such as hepatitis A, shigellosis, and Mycobacterium tuberculosis between humans and NHP is well documented.

Many of the monkeys in the pet market are macaques. Surveys have shown that 70-100% of adult macaques in both captive and wild populations are infected with Simian Herpes B virus. Infected monkeys remain carriers throughout their life, intermittently shedding the virus in body fluids, particularly during mating, illness, or stressful events. Simian Herpes B virus is a zoonotic infection, causing severe and often fatal meningoencephalitis when transmitted to humans (70% case fatality rate). Herpes B virus infection requires specialized testing for diagnosis, and very few cases in humans have been diagnosed.

State and local laws and ordinances vary widely regarding restrictions on the maintenance of NHP and other wild animals in private ownership, however most states do not have regulations which effectively address this issue. Federal regulations involve many agencies and as they are enforced presently, lack the continuity to control the public health risks of NHP in the pet trade. The exotic animal trade raises complex issues of animal welfare, public health, and conservation.

Accredited zoological parks and bona fide research facilities mandate specialized training for handlers, and enforce strict protocols concerning zoonotic disease and injury hazards associated

with captive NHP's. In contrast, well intentioned pet owners, generally lack the expertise and equipment to maintain NHP safely, and consequently put the welfare of themselves, their families, friends, neighborhoods, and often others, at risk of disease and serious injury.

#### COORDINATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS:

##### Agencies for Response:

National Center for Infectious Diseases (NCID), CDC  
Division of Quarantine, National Center for Infectious Diseases (NCID), CDC  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
United States Fish and Wildlife Services

##### Agencies for Information:

National Institutes of Health  
American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine  
American Zoologic Association

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