

### **03-ID-13**

**Committee:** Infectious Diseases

**Title:** Developing Importation and Exportation Restrictions on Exotic and Native Wildlife with Potential Adverse Impact on Public Health

\* Definitions: Exotic Wildlife: Any wildlife that is not native to the United States including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians. Native Wildlife: Any wildlife that is native to the United States.

**Statement of the Problem:**

A lucrative and largely unregulated trade in imported exotic wildlife is thriving in the United States. This trade poses a risk of introducing and disseminating exotic zoonotic pathogens. These pathogens threaten both human and animal health, and have the potential to become established and maintained in native animal and insect reservoirs. On June 11, 2003, an emergency executive order was implemented by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) banning the importation, interstate and intrastate movement of certain African rodents and prairie dogs in the United States in response to an outbreak of monkeypox in animals and humans. To protect public health, this order should be permanently sustained and expanded to restrict the importation, exportation and movement of exotic wildlife with potential adverse impact on public health. This is a joint statement of the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians (NASPHV) and the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE).

**Position to be Adopted:**

NASPHV and CSTE recommend that a working group consisting of representatives from the CDC; U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), FDA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and NASPHV and CSTE be formed with goals of rapidly:

- Developing recommendations for effectively restricting the importation and exportation of exotic or native live or dead wildlife having a potential impact on public health, except for legitimate scientific use, exhibition in an accredited zoological institution, or captive breeding in programs for conservation or species survival in an accredited institution. These recommendations should include:
  - Identifying the responsibilities of various federal agencies with regard to regulation of importation of exotic wildlife and exportation of exotic and native wildlife.
  - Developing methods to monitor and maintain ownership and movement data on all imported wildlife and to enforce institutional responsibility in maintaining exotic wildlife so that they are not redistributed for private ownership and recreational purposes.
  - Monitoring and assuring legitimacy and safety of interstate movements and redistributions of exotic wildlife.
  - Supporting state and local public health infrastructure in identification and response to public health threats from diseases introduced and transmitted from exotic wildlife.
  - Working with zoos and research institutions to develop policies to reduce risks of introduction of disease into their collections.
  - Collecting comprehensive data on the distribution channels for exotic wildlife in the pet trade. Develop a national action plan to restrict the redistribution and translocation of all exotic wildlife to legitimate scientific and exhibition purposes.

**Background:**

Exotic wildlife is bred, traded, sold, and purchased for private ownership in most states. Health department and animal control officials are often consulted following animal bites and other exposures. Assessment of these exposures requires special attention due to the potential for rare and fatal zoonoses, severe injuries, and serious wound-related infections.

Zoonoses posing serious or fatal risks for humans, such as herpes B virus, monkeypox, plague, simian immunodeficiency virus, rabies and tularemia, have been transmitted from infected exotic wildlife to humans. More than 60% of newly recognized emerging infectious diseases, including hantaviruses, arboviruses, arenaviruses, and monkeypox, are zoonotic. There are no licensed vaccines or medical treatments to prevent or protect exotic wildlife against zoonotic disease. Due to the close relationship between humans and the animals in their care (including pets) there is potential for interspecies exchange of a wide spectrum of disease-causing organisms. Currently, the exotic and native wildlife pet trade does not maintain sufficient records to allow trace backs or trace forwards after problems are identified. Extensive interstate and intrastate movement and mixing of animals from various sources occurs. State and local regulations vary widely regarding restrictions on the maintenance of exotic and native wildlife 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, these regulations lack the ability to effectively control the public health risks of exotic wildlife in the pet trade. The exotic and native wildlife 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 animals. In contrast, well-intentioned pet dealers, breeders and private owners generally lack the expertise to maintain exotic and native wildlife safely, and consequently put humans and other animals at risk for disease and serious injury.

Coordination with Other Agencies/Organizations:

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