

## **Conservation translocation concerns**

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Dear Sir or Madam

It has come to the attention of the authors that there are an ever-increasing number of well-meaning animal enthusiasts who are taking the concept of 're-wilding' into their own hands. We are concerned by a number of reports of native amphibians and reptiles in particular being reared for the purpose of release into the wild without due procedure being followed. Conservation translocations refer to the deliberate movement of species from A to B for the purpose of population reinforcement or reintroduction, assisted colonisation or ecological replacement. Translocation involves the movement of not only intended individuals but an accompanying biological 'package' of parasites to which the translocated animal is host. Whilst it is important to conserve many commensal parasites, the risk of inadvertently translocating pathogens is high. The consequences of disease-causing agents being introduced at a release site include compromised welfare, morbidity and mortality among not only translocated animals but existing populations including sympatric species at the destination location. The threat of infectious disease outbreaks is especially high when the introduced parasite is novel to animals at the destination site. To ensure disease risks are adequately understood prior to a translocation the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) advises that a disease risk analysis (DRA) is completed (OIE & IUCN 2014). A DRA pulls together the latest evidence-based research on the hazards, infectious and non-infectious, that could jeopardise the health and welfare of animals at each stage of the translocation pathway. It is only after a DRA has been conducted that a suitable disease risk management and post-release health surveillance protocol can be developed to mitigate against identified threats and attention turned to planning the practical aspects of the proposed translocation. The authors wish to alert readers to the imperative need to follow guidelines. Ideally we would encourage enthusiasts to consult established conservation organisations should they wish to volunteer their time and assistance in supporting conservation projects. There is undoubtedly much to be gained from generating awareness and support for such efforts. The purpose of this letter is to stress to interested individuals the importance of a precautionary and judicious approach to conservation translocations.

World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) & International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (2014). – Guidelines for Wildlife Disease Risk Analysis. OIE, Paris, 24 pp. Published in association with the IUCN and the Species Survival Commission.

366 words excluding reference

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