

Placement of Confiscated Animals

(Adapted from IUCN 2002 *Guidelines for the Placement of Confiscated Animals* and CITES *Guidelines for the Disposal of Confiscated Live Species of Species included in the Appendices*)

Returning confiscated animals to the wild is the most popular choice for the placement of confiscated animals and encourages popular support, but returning animals to the wild can have negative consequences for conservation. Animals confiscated from the pet trade should never be released into the local area unless rangers confiscate animals from hunters in the immediate vicinity of the animal's capture. The most important factor in placing the confiscated animal is the species conservation status. When placing individual animals of highly endangered species particular attention should be given to whether the animal can contribute to a conservation program.

Conservation goals in placing confiscated animals:

- Maximize the conservation value of the animal without jeopardizing wild populations
- Discourage further illegal trade
- Provide a humane solution for the confiscated animal

Options for placement:

- Keeping the animal in captivity
- Euthanasia
- Returning the animal to the wild

1. Captivity

Types of captive facilities:

- Zoos and Aquaria
- Rescue Centers
- Life-time Care Facilities
- Specialist Societies or Clubs
- Humane Societies

Benefits of captivity:

- Educational value
- Satisfaction from increased chance of survival for the animal
- Captive breeding programs to results in (re)introductions
- Research (conservation or other)

Concerns with captivity:

- Disease
- Animal escapes from captivity that can become invasive
- Cost
- Potential to encourage undesired trade (see Transfer of Ownership)

Transfer of ownership:

Ownership transfers should be documented and clear, and include clear ownership of future offspring. Confiscating authorities should be cognizant of public perception when fees are involved in transfer of ownership.

2. Return to the Wild:

“Poorly planned or executed release or (re)-introduction programmes are no better than dumping animals in the wild and should be vigorously opposed on both conservation and humane grounds.”
(IUCN 2002)

Risks and problems associated with the inappropriate release of animals into the wild:

- High mortality of released animals, often by starvation
- Animals released outside their natural range have the potential to become pests or invasive
- Animals from the wildlife trade are exposed to many diseases that can be transferred to wild populations
- Animals released outside their natural range can hybridize or compete with local wild populations

Benefits of return to the wild:

- May strengthen wild populations and improve the long-term conservation potential of the species or of the local population
- Makes a strong political statement about the fate of confiscated animals and their positive conservation impact; may increase local conservation ethics
- Animals returned to the wild have a chance to fulfill their biological roles

3. Euthanasia:

Humanely putting a living organism to death.

Benefits of euthanasia:

- Far fewer risks for wild and captive populations than return to the wild or maintenance in captivity
- Discourages the activities that give rise to confiscation
- Inexpensive
- The most humane option in many situations

Risks of euthanasia:

- Possible negative public perception of authorities
- The possible loss of unique genetic material

Links to IUCN and CITES Guidelines:

- <http://www.iucnsscrg.org/download/EnglishConfGlines.pdf>
- <http://www.cites.org/eng/res/10/10-07.shtml>
- The IUCN/SSC Re-Introduction Specialist Group (RSG)
- http://www.iucnsscrg.org/about_us.php
- The IUCN Primate Specialist Group Regional Coordinators
- <http://www.primatesg.org/psg.htm>

