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PET TRADE PATHWAY TOOLKIT

A CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS & SPONSORS

Invasive species (harmful non-native organisms) are one of the major threats to native wildlife and habitats. The pet/aquaria trade has been identified as a substantial source of potentially invasive species; escaped or released pets and aquaria species can predate upon, compete with, or spread diseases and parasites to native wildlife. Aquaria dumping and water gardening can also be sources of invasive plants.

In order to minimize the invasion risk of the “pet/aquaria trade pathway,” Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recently adopted a decision (May 2008) to collate case studies of best management practices that industries, governments, and others are taking to prevent the release, escape, and establishment of former pets and aquaria species. The CBD explicitly recognized the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC; www.pijac.org) and the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP; www.gisp.org) as leaders in this process. Thus, the two organizations are now working together to develop a toolkit of regulatory and non-regulatory measures to minimize the introduction of animals, plants, pathogens, and parasites via the “pet/aquaria trade pathway.”

The final product will be modeled after the comprehensive GISP Toolkit (*Invasive Alien Species: A Toolkit for Best Prevention and Management Practices*; www.gisp.org) and made available in multiple formats: executive summary (PDF and print) and as a complete publication (PDF and print-on-demand). Pages 3-8 of this handout provide case studies of some of the measures that will be featured in the “pet/aquaria trade pathway” toolkit.

At this time, we are seeking:

- **Additional case studies of relevant regulatory and non-regulatory measures from around the world.**
- **Financial sponsors to assist in the development, design, and distribution of the toolkit. All sponsors will be acknowledged in the publication by name and logo.**

Preliminary Budget

Toolkit Production	Cost (US\$)
Consultant on regulatory measures	\$30,000
Consultant on non-regulatory measures	\$30,000
Design executive summary	\$ 1,000
Design complete toolkit	\$ 2,000
Print executive summary	\$ 4,000
CDs	\$ 1,000
Mailing/other distribution	\$ 1,000
Promotion/marketing	\$ 5,000
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,000
Total	\$75,000

For further information contact:

- Dr. Jamie K. Reaser, Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC);
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- Dr. Sarah Simons, The Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP);
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The Pet Release Pathway: Case Studies in Invasive Alien Species Prevention

On the following pages we provide case studies of best management practices (“tools”) that the pet industry is implementing in order to minimize the risk of alien species being released or escaping into the natural environment through the pet trade pathway. In reviewing these case studies, it is important to consider that the greatest risks along this pathway are likely associated with:

- Consumers (pet owners);
- Non-regulated direct sales – such as sales through the internet and newspapers, hobbyist shows, flea markets, etc;
- Pets that are free or inexpensive;
- Species which grow large, reproduce easily and in large numbers in captivity, have specialized dietary or other husbandry requirements, and have aggressive temperaments; and
- Species ecologically suited to the geographic region in which they are maintained as pets.

Note: This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of options or examples. We welcome interested individuals, organizations, and governments to submit additional case studies of relevant regulatory and non-regulatory measures. Please refer to the contact information at the bottom of the page.

CASE STUDIES

Note: Many of these programmes are “scalable” to different socio-economic and cultural contexts and the project leaders are willing to provide guidance on implementation.

Tool I: Animal Inspection, Acclimation, and Quarantine Protocols/Plans

Goals:

At various stages (e.g., import, distribution, retail) along the pet trade pathway animals are:

- Thoroughly inspected for external parasites, signs of disease, and “hitchhikers” (e.g., other animals or plants, soil, etc) in order to minimize the risk of biological invasion. [Note: housing and shipping containers are inspected as well]
- Acclimated to specific husbandry conditions in order to reduce stress factors which could make them more susceptible to pathogens and parasites.
- Quarantined to enable a) further inspection overtime and b) treatment of issues of concern.

Examples:

- The Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association (OATA; www.ornamentalfish.org) has developed provisions (codes of conduct) for fish isolation and treatment.

- Quality Marine (www.qualitymarineusa.com) has developed company policy and procedure manuals for acclimation, quarantine, and water sterilization. Their system is considered “state of the art.”
- *National Reptile Improvement Plan* (www.pijac.org). This comprehensive plan was developed by the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) in collaboration with the State of Florida and other stakeholders (e.g., the livestock industry and animal welfare groups). It: a) provides written guidelines and an accreditation program for reptile and amphibian importers and distributors to inspect for and treat external parasites and b) allows state and federal agency staff to inspect accredited facilities as if they were under formal regulation. The program has been implemented nation-wide and includes all of the major reptile/amphibian distributors in the US. It will likely expand to include pathogens, including the fungus that causes chytridiomycosis in amphibians.

Tool II: Biosecurity Measures: Housing, Packaging, and Handling

Goal:

- Ensure that pets, as well as associated pathogens, parasites, and hitchhikers, cannot escape from, or be transmitted through, industry facilities or during transport.

Examples:

- PetSmart (www.petsmart.com) has written a zoonoses protocol for store employees in order to reduce the risk of disease transfer among animals or to people. Staff are required to wear protective equipment (e.g., N-95 masks, gloves, gowns) when handling animals or cleaning cages.
- The Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association (OATA; www.ornamentalfish.org) has developed a comprehensive self-assessment system for ensuring high standards of biosecurity throughout the trade pathway.

Tool III: Care Sheets

Goal:

- Provide pet owners with information on the proper care of specific types of pets so that they can a) determine if that species is the best choice of a pet and b) keep the pet healthy and adequately housed.

Examples:

- PIJAC Canada (www.pijaccanada.org) provides Reptiles and Their Care Handouts that were created in collaboration with Environment Canada. These are distributed to all Ontario pet stores in a “pad” format – i.e. the pet store staff can tear off the handouts and provide them to the customers. The handouts include a specific message about invasive alien species.
- PetSmart (www.petsmart.com) distributes care guides with every pet purchased. These promote the Habitattitude™ message.

Tool IV: Codes of Conduct/Practice

Goal:

- Provide a list and description of actions that can be taken by the industry and/or consumers to minimize the risk of pets being abandoned or escaping. In some cases, the codes also address aquatic plants and hitchhikers.

Examples:

- Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) is developing a *Code of Practice for UK Website Owners Offering for Sale Fauna & Flora* (target is illegal trade; not yet publicly available). (PAW: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/paw/partner/default.htm>)
- The Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association (OATA; www.ornamentalfish.org) worked with other stakeholder to develop the *Horticulture Code of Practice* under the UK's Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs. www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/non-native/pdf/non-nativecop.pdf
- A team of collaborators in Brazil have created voluntary codes of conduct for the pet trade (Instituto Hórus; http://www.institutohorus.org.br/pr_trabalhos_eng.htm)
- The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC; www.pijac.org) recently developed codes of conduct for water gardeners and is working on codes of conduct for water garden retailers. These will be made available through the PIJAC website and trade/consumer magazines in the near future.

Tool V: Consumer Education/Outreach Campaigns

Goals

Use a comprehensive approach to -

- Raise awareness of the potential environmental, economic, and/or human health implications of pet abandonment (i.e. invasive alien species).
- Educate consumers on actions they can take to ensure a mutually beneficial relationship with their pets (i.e. proper choice of pet and care) so that the need/desire to give up the pet does not arise.
- Educate consumers on actions they can take as alternatives to pet abandonment if they do need/desire to give up their pet.

Examples:

- “*Pet Fish Belong...*” and “*Keep Your Pond Plants in the Garden.*” Are poster campaigns run by the Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association (OATA; www.ornamentalfish.org) to educate consumers not to release their ornamental fish and water garden plants into the wild. The fish campaign supports Section 14 of the UK's Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and Section 30 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act (1975).
<http://www.ornamentalfish.org/aquanautconservation/petfishbelong.php>
<http://www.ornamentalfish.org/aquanautconservation/invasiveplants.php>
In addition, OATA prints the message “Ornamental fish and plants bought for aquariums and ponds must never be released into the wild” on plastic bags used to transport fish home from pet stores (@ 2 million annually).

- “**STOP – Do Not Release Aquarium Pets or Plants.**” Campaign initiated by PIJAC Canada (www.pijaccanada.com) in 1998. Spread message through a bilingual poster (posted in pet stores throughout Ontario) and 30,000+ educational brochures inserted into aquarium kits by the manufacturers. These kits were then sold to customers through regional pet stores. This program has now been incorporated into PIJAC Canada’s Freshwater Fish Certification Program and transitioned into Habitattitude™.
- “**Habitattitude™.**” Campaign initiated in 2004 by the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC; www.pijac.org) and the US government (US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Sea Grant). It now includes more than 70 partners in the US and has been adopted by PIJAC Canada (www.habitattitude.ca). Goals are to: a) encourage wise choices in pets and proper animal care (Habits), b) provide alternatives to release of pets (Attitudes), c) and promote environmental stewardship (Habitats). The major focus to date has been on fish and aquatic plants, although the program is now expanding to include reptiles and amphibians. Campaign messages are conveyed through websites, bookmarks, posters, aquaria kit inserts, fish bags, trade show booths and public events, advertisements in trade and consumer magazines, and advertisements in store newspaper circulars.
- **Bd-Free ‘Phibs.** Campaign initiated by the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC; www.pijac.org) in 2007 to minimize the risk of transmission of the highly invasive fungus *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* to amphibians through the pet trade pathway. The program will raise awareness of the issue among the industry and consumers, as well as provide best practice protocols for inspection, quarantine, and treatment.

Tool VI: Customer Record Keeping

Goals:

- To be able to contact the customer if there is a need to inform them of relevant information (e.g., disease risk).
- Obtain written customer acknowledgement (signature) on a form that outlines specific care needs, risks, etc. relating to the pet purchased.

Example:

- For all pets except fish, PetSmart (www.petsmart.com) requires pet owners to fill out a Customer Sales Record, including a signature of acceptance, when they purchase the animal. Three copies are made – for the owner, store, and corporate office.

Tool VII: Industry Education/Outreach Campaigns

Goals:

- Raise awareness within the pet industry (e.g., importers, distributors, retailers) of invasive alien species issues.
- Educate members of the pet industry on actions they can take to minimize the risk of biological invasion.

- Empower members of the industry to educate consumers on invasive alien species issues and responsible behaviors (e.g., pet choice, care, and placement).

Examples:

- PetSmart (www.petsmart.com) has developed a written *Vet Assured Program* which provides guidance on meeting standards in disease prevention, record keeping, transportation and zoonoses control. PetSmart vendors are required to meet these standards.
- The Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association (OATA; www.ornamentalfish.org) has developed best practice guidance and tools for the industry on Koi Herpes Virus (KHV; www.efishbusiness.co.uk/news/OATA%20KHV.pdf).
- A team of collaborators in Brazil have created education materials on invasive species issues for the pet trade (Instituto Hórus; http://www.institutohorus.org.br/pr_trabalhos_eng.htm)
- ***PetAlerts***. The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC; www.pijac.org) distributes hard copy and electronic alerts to its Members on urgent issues related to invasive species and zoonotic disease.
- “***Be Responsible...***” boxes. California Zoological Supply (www.calzoo.com) prints the following messages on all boxes of reptiles shipped to their wholesale distributors, “Be responsible. Please don’t release unwanted pets into the wild.” This message is also going to be incorporated into future advertising programs.

Tool VIII: Rehoming Programmes

Goal:

- Find new, responsible homes for unwanted pets.

Examples:

- For more than ten years, California Zoological Supply (www.calzoo.com) has been working with the Santa Ana Zoo to find new homes for unwanted reptiles. Under a joint agreement, when a member of the public calls Santa Ana Zoo to say that they want to give up their pet, the Zoo puts them in touch with California Zoological Supply which then uses its network of reptile hobbyists to re-home the animal. They have a 100% success rate.
- The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC; www.pijac.org) and pet retailers have worked with the State of Florida to establish ***Nonnative Pet Amnesty Day***. On specific dates in specific locations, members of the public can surrender their unwanted, nonnative pets (legal or illegal) without repercussion. The animals are then rehomed with pre-evaluated and approved individuals. The Amnesty Day event includes education and outreach activities focused on invasive alien species (<http://myfwc.com/nonnatives/amnestyDay2008.html>).

Tool IX: Same Gender Programmes

Goal:

Please send additional case studies and expressions of sponsorship interest to Drs. Jamie K. Reaser (7 pijacscience@nelsoncable.com) and Sarah Simons (s.simons@gisp.org). Note: This compilation is a work in progress. We kindly ask that you do not reproduce it for your own purposes.

- Eliminate unwanted matings which could lead to pet overpopulation.

Example:

- For hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice, and guinea pigs, PetSmart (www.petsmart.com) pre-selects stores to be either a MALE or FEMALE STORE and only allows pets shipped-to and sold-from these stores to be of the same gender.

Tool X: Spay/Neuter Programmes

Goals:

- Eliminate unwanted matings which could lead to pet overpopulation.
- Enable owners to house animals of opposite sex together, which can reduce risk of pet-pet aggression.

Examples:

- Marshall Farms (www.marshallfarms.com) supplies pet distributors and retail stores with ferrets and rabbits that have already been spayed or neutered.
- PetSmart (www.petsmart.com) only purchases and sells ferrets and rabbits that have been spayed or neutered.