

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release June 25, 1974

McGarvey 202/343-5634

HEARINGS SET ON IMPORTATION OF INJURIOUS WILDLIFE

Proposed regulations governing the importation of wildlife which are injurious to human beings, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and native wildlife will be the subject of public hearings in Washington, D.C., Miami, Kansas City, and San Francisco in early August, Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service announced today.

"Current information shows that injury caused by imported wildlife is more widespread and serious than previously believed," Greenwalt said.

An estimated eight people a year are bitten by imported venomous snakes. Exotic pets in 1972 bit at least 163 people in New York City alone. Small turtles bought in pet stores are estimated to cause 40,000 annual cases of salmonella poisoning. Imported monkeys can infect humans with tuberculosis and hepatitis. Venomous fish set free in the wild have poisoned and paralyzed people. Newcastle's disease, brought in by parrots and myna birds, killed over 11 million chickens in California in 1973.

The African clawed frog, formerly used as a pregnancy test for humans but displaced by more sophisticated methods, has become established in Southern California, presumably because excess supplies were released into the wild or sold to pet stores. Thousands of these creatures have been discovered in San Diego County's Sweetwater Reservoir and in drainage ditches in Orange County. These exotic frogs, which grow to a length of 10 inches, are reputed to have voracious appetites, with diets including crayfish, aquatic insects, small fish, and other amphibians. This frog first showed up in the wild in 1971, and it may have been responsible for the decline of the local population of tree frogs. It is feared they might reach the Colorado River waterway where they could do much more damage. Numerous other examples of injurious wildlife are cited in a draft environmental impact statement.

The proposed regulations were first published in the Federal Register in December 1973. Availability of the draft environmental impact statement was announced in the Federal Register on June 5, 1974. The proposal would prohibit the import of injurious wildlife except as permitted by the Secretary of the Interior for scientific, educational, zoological, or medical purposes. The proposal includes a list of "low risk" wildlife, which means that all species not listed as "low risk" would be prohibited from importation except under a strict permit system and for the reasons indicated above.

These regulations could have a significant impact on the pet industry in the United States. The ornamental aquarium fish and accessories trade is likely to suffer the greatest economic hardship. The proposed regula-

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tions would reduce bird importation by about 50 percent. Trade in mammals would be reduced by about 45 percent and imports of reptiles would be reduced about 95 percent. Importing of amphibians would be curtailed by about 15 percent.

Copies of the draft environmental impact statement are available for public inspection during normal business hours at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Suite 600, 1612 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., and at the regional offices listed below.

1500 N.E. Irving Street
Portland, Oregon

500 Gold Avenue, S.W.
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Federal Building, Fort Snelling
Twin Cities, Minnesota

17 Executive Park Drive
Atlanta, Georgia

John M. McCormack Post Office
and Courthouse
Boston, Massachusetts

10597 West Sixth Avenue
Denver, Colorado

813 D Street
Anchorage, Alaska

Copies also available at:

Regional Solicitor
Federal Building
450 Golden Gate Avenue #14126
San Francisco, California

U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
4471 N.W. 36th Street
Miami Springs, Florida

Public hearings will be held at the following locations:

August 5, 1974
Auditorium
Department of the Interior
18th & C Streets, N.W.
Washington, D.C.
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

August 5, 1974
Miami-Dade Community College
North Campus
Ten Players' Theater
1130 N.W. 27th Avenue
Miami, Florida
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

August 6, 1974
Crown Center Hotel
Centennial B Room
1 Pershing Road
Kansas City, Missouri
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

August 9, 1974
Auditorium
Veterans' Memorial Building
Van Ness and McCallister
San Francisco, California
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Persons wishing to make an oral presentation or submit their views in writing at any of these hearings should file a notice to this effect with the Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 18th & C Streets, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240, on or before July 22, 1974.

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