

Study on transport losses of CITES-protected and non-protected animal species

This document has been prepared by the Chairman of the Transport Working Group (TWG) of the Animals Committee.

Animals caught from the wild are internationally traded on a large scale. Some of those animals traded are protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) while many other species remain unprotected. Besides that it's a hard fact that there still is mortality to be recorded during transport of wild animals. It stands to reason that organizations for the protection of animals or nature conservation organisations as well as the media constantly complain about transport losses. Government officials all over the world try to encourage all those involved in transports of live animals through regulations, inspections, and sanctions to adhere to the relevant regulations and to optimise their shipments.

In the wake of a 'Study on Transport Mortality during the Import of Wild Caught Birds and Reptiles to Germany' (published in 1998), the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) in Germany commissioned a follow-up project on this subject. The findings of this project have now been published in a current 'BfN-Script No. 90' in English.

The study involved the compilation and analysis of data from 19 different sources comprising a total of 7,450,703 individuals in 38,815 entries. 89% of these entries related to shipments of birds, 9% reptiles and 2% other animal groups. The proportion of entries relating to CITES-protected species was 65%. The study processed information on 2,132 species, of which 742 are listed in the CITES Appendices. Of the animals registered 60% originated from Africa, approximately 15% from Asia and about 9% from the United States of America.

The average mortality rate on arrival for all data amounted to 1.53%. Arthropods, with 5.99% and amphibians, with 4.96 %, showed the highest mortality rates. They were followed by reptiles, with 3.14%. The lowest mortality rates were found in birds, with 1.36% and in mammals, with 0.65%. In order to identify species particularly sensitive to transport, the findings were statistically evaluated where possible. Furthermore, not only the comparison between the different transporting airlines and their compliance with IATA standards, but also the comparison between the different exporting countries, was elaborated.

To date no other study on transport of CITES-protected animals has been based on such a comparable volume of data. The outcome of information with regard to non-protected species is likewise remarkable. The study shows that the average mortality rate in transit in general is relatively low but, on the other hand, it also reveals a significant difference between the various species, airlines and countries of origin.

The study can be ordered free-of-charge from the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, Bonn, Germany, through the following website: citesma@bfn.de.