

Submission Date: 5/19/2005

Committee: Infectious Disease
05-ID-10

Title: Addressing Public Health Threats Associated with the Exotic Pet Trade

Statement of the Problem:

Despite a recent surge of zoonotic diseases introduced into the United States and the escalating impact of zoonoses globally, there has not been any coordinated and focused national effort to proactively control the health threats associated with the unrestricted trade in exotic animals. In 2003, a NASPHV/ CSTE position statement 03-ID-13 titled "Developing Importation and Exportation Restrictions on Exotic and Native Wildlife with Potential Adverse Impact on Public Health" described the problem. While federal agencies expressed support, and the monkeypox outbreak was effectively controlled, there is no ongoing task force dedicated to mitigating the looming zoonotic disease risks associated with the trade in exotic animals. Therefore, as zoonotic diseases evolve and adapt to new hosts, the same national health threat exists today that allowed monkeypox to be introduced to the United States two years ago. State and local regulations vary widely regarding the private ownership of exotic and native wildlife, however, many states do not have regulations which effectively prevent and control the public health threats associated with exotic animals. Federal regulations concerning exotic animals involve many agencies and are not comprehensive or coordinated to effectively control and prevent public health risks posed by the trade in exotic wildlife. The myriad of agency jurisdictions and authorities needs to be reviewed, aligned and strengthened to more effectively protect public and animal health from zoonotic diseases transmitted by exotic animals.

Statement of the desired action(s) to be taken: NASPHV and CSTE recommend that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lead and support an initiative to coordinate federal agencies, CSTE/NASPHV and other stakeholders in a working group to formulate effective policy and develop and implement a comprehensive approach to address the public health threats associated with the international and national trade in exotic animals.

Fiscal Impact:

Public Health Impact:

New policy and a nationally coordinated plan will assist in protecting public health, animal health and native wildlife from introduced diseases, most of which do not have effective vaccines or treatments.

Coordination: USDA, FDA, USFWS, state agencies, US Humane Society, zoos and other professional organizations will be important collaborators. CDC should lead this effort.

Agencies for Response:

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