

DISEASE EMERGENCE AND SPREAD RELATED TO WILDLIFE TRADE: AQUATIC SPECIES

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Wild aquatic animals have been traded globally for many decades and this trade has continued to grow at a rapid rate in recent years. There are several recognised cases of international transfer and subsequent spread of serious disease via this wildlife trade. For fish, one example is a monogenean parasite that has caused serious population declines of wild Atlantic salmon in Norwegian rivers following its introduction via live juvenile salmon imported for stock enhancement. Other examples will be presented. For crustaceans, transfer of live freshwater crayfish from North America to Europe for human consumption and farming led to the introduction and widespread distribution of a devastating fungal disease of native crayfish species some of which are now classified as ‘endangered’ in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. As for amphibians, the global trade in ornamental species for the pet trade is substantial and whilst some species are now captive-bred, large numbers are caught from the wild and shipped internationally. There has been recent confirmation that pathogenic infections are present in live amphibians captured from the wild and traded internationally and that this provides a major route for country-to-country spread of serious diseases, two of which are being associated with major declines of amphibian populations in numerous countries.

Increased surveillance improves the chances of detecting a disease (or its pathogen) that is present at a low level in aquatic wildlife in a country. Without effective country-wide surveillance, a pathogenic agent may go undetected and give the false impression that a country is free of the pathogen. OIE provides detailed guidance on the best methods for surveillance and detection of important pathogens of aquatic animals, including wild populations, to increase knowledge and awareness of their occurrence and distribution, and is continuously developing standards to ensure the sanitary safety of international trade.

