Education and enforcement
...or positive lists?

‘The importance of education and better enforcement of existing legislation and arguments against a positive list approach’

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European Pet Organization

- created in Vienna in 1990
- umbrella organization for national pet trade associations in Europe
- supports best practices and expertise of the pet industry as well as recommendations toward pet lovers to choose and keep pets in a responsible way
- Base our work on science and practical experience from how the animal trade and the hobbies actually work

www.europets.org
Through our members, EPO represents thousands of small and medium sized businesses in the European pet trade.

We also speak on behalf of millions of dedicated animal keepers all over Europe.
Pet keeping is important in modern society

• Active involvement with animals supports our mental and physical health, as well as promoting a general interest in animal welfare, and an increased interest in biology and nature conservation.

• Sales in accessories, food and services for pets are an important industry, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs.

• More than 90 million households in the EU (46% of all) live with pets.
Pets in Europe

- 113 million cats
- 92 million dogs
- 48 million birds
- 29 million small mammals
- 16 million aquaria
- 11 million reptiles
“Exotic” pets

- **Exotic**: “unusual and exciting because of coming (or seeming to come) from far away, especially a tropical country.”

- **Exotic pet**: “a pet which is relatively rare or unusual to keep, or is generally thought of as a wild species rather than as a domesticated pet. The definition varies by culture, location, and over time...”

- In EPO we focus on suitability for keeping by the right person, under the right conditions, from the right source

- EPO membership is bound by our charter on the sustainability of pet keeping and trade
Cruelty in trade and keeping?

The left photo is no more accurately representing general keeping of or trade in “exotic” pets ...

... than what the right one is the keeping of dogs.
The EU Action Plan Against Wildlife Trafficking

- EPO has been supportive since the initial action plan was published in 2016, and still are – after the last revision of November 2022
- EPO has published several revisions of our document underlining how and why the regulated pet trade is part of the solution to end illegal trafficking
- see [www.europets.org/activities](http://www.europets.org/activities)
Priority 1: Preventing wildlife trafficking and addressing its root causes

• Raise consumer awareness on how to distinguish between legal and illegal trade.

• Implement initiatives at all levels ... that support livelihoods and the sustainable use of wildlife and wildlife products by encouraging and facilitating the legal and sustainable sourcing of wildlife products.
Priority 3: Enforcing regulations and policies to fight wildlife trafficking effectively

• Develop and use state-of-the-art tools and methods to facilitate the work of law-enforcement authorities and detect illegal wildlife activities.

• Implement the recommendations of CITES Resolution Conf. 11.3 paragraphs 12 and 13 on wildlife crime linked to the internet.
Priority 2: Strengthening the legal and policy framework against wildlife trafficking

- Objective 6, action 5: Explore the need for, added value of, and feasibility of revising existing measures or creating new tools to reduce unsustainable trade in wildlife (e.g. a ‘positive list’...)

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EPO supports the position of the European Commission

- **Positive lists of animals** that can be traded or kept as pets do **NOT** provide an effective solution to address the illegal trade in or welfare of live animals.

- **Specific bans or (perhaps better) licensing requirements on unsuitable species** (negative lists) are easier to produce and more understandable for the general public.
Positive lists are not the solution; because...

EPO Position Document on Positive Lists: https://www.europets.org/activities

Prof. Dr. Dr. Spranger: Expert opinion on the legal admissibility of positive lists: https://www.zzf.de/expert-opinion
Impossible to find objective criteria

• With the criteria that has been used for positive lists in e.g. Norway, the Netherlands, and Belgium the selection of species often appears totally random from a animal keepers point of view.

• Cats and dogs would not make it on to most existing positive lists if they were to be selected by the same criteria as “exotic” species.

• A restricted positive list will lead to random discrimination of pet owners.
Loss of husbandry and keeping expertise

- The pet industry has enabled progress in the development of food, enclosures, technical equipment, specialty lighting etc. by anticipating market opportunities in a heterogeneous pet market.
- Specialist hobbyists have contributed significant new knowledge to the biology, keeping and conservation of a wide range of animal species.
- Speciality equipment and feeds may disappear from the market.
- Captive breeding of threatened and extinct species may stop.
Reduces important diversity

Who are we to decide what animals people should care about?

There is not ONE animal species that is suitable for every human.
Loss of sustainable sourcing and sustainable livelihoods

The variety of species and their global sourcing are of great importance for local livelihoods around the world supplying the pet sector in Europe.
Incentive for illegal trafficking

- A positive list could lead to undesirable consequences due to purchase from uncontrolled sources (cf. illegal puppy trade) and consequently to animal welfare problems when keeping pets.
- Bans must be justifiable and understandable (to the general public) and enforceable (for the authorities).
The social value of pet ownership is at risk

• Pets are an important part of our social and cultural life. More than 90 million households in the EU (46% of all) live with pets.

• The good effects of keeping pets represent an important benefit for the individual pet owner, for our health system and for society as a whole.

• A general ban on pet ownership by means of a positive list would give the impression that pet ownership is something bad in principle. The opposite is true.

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