

The Wildlife Disease Crisis: Potential State Legislation

Overview

Wildlife disease, or zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19, present a rapidly growing hazard to human health and even livestock. Measures to regulate or restrict wildlife and pet trade, breeding farms and wet markets, as well as wildlife and ecosystem conservation, and public health surveillance, monitoring, reporting and interagency coordination can be effective tools for states to prevent or control future zoonotic outbreaks.

Potential State Provisions



Support wildlife trafficking and trade restrictions on exotic wildlife

- Restrict intrastate sale and trade in exotic wildlife species, especially those that may carry zoonotic disease
- Require state agencies to develop and maintain an active list of species at risk of carrying zoonotic disease
- Support state agency inspection, enforcement of and forensic testing of wildlife imports
- Coordinate and communicate with other states and federal agencies regarding restrictions and violations



Apply the “One Health” concept to agency responsibility and coordination

- Direct state agencies to develop interagency, statewide plans using the “One Health” approach to protect human health, wildlife health, and environment health
 - Require coordination and communication on zoonotic disease between agencies relevant to wildlife health, ecosystem health and human health
 - Support collaboration and cooperation with higher education institutions
- Human Health
 - Expand epidemiology departments and testing, monitoring, reporting of infections
 - Strengthen state capacity for coordinating zoonotic outbreak prevention, preparedness, detection, education and response
 - Expand genomic research capabilities and public-private coordination
- Wildlife/animal health
 - Require agencies to help ensure that native species are protected and conserved
 - Mandate monitoring and response on health of zoonotic risk species such as bats
 - Enhance agencies’ authority and ability to control invasive and exotic species
- Environment/ecosystem health
 - Support protection of 30% of land and water areas by 2030
 - Regulate deforestation and development of natural areas, Growth Management Acts



Improve restrictions on domestic animal and pet trade

- Ban intrastate pet trade and import of species of zoonotic risk (i.e. primates, bats)
- Mandate collection and sharing of pathogen data from wildlife imports with other states

- Develop comprehensive bans ([20 states](#)) on private ownership of wild or exotic animals, particularly zoonotic disease carriers
- Implement “Clean Trade” programs to test before transport or at the state border, with animal health certificates accompanying wildlife
- Set strict standards of care for animals held in, or being transported by, animal shelters; establish an animal [shelter regulation fund](#)
- Coordinate/communicate with other states and federal agencies regarding restrictions/violations



Monitor, regulate and restrict wildlife breeding farms and diseases in wildlife and livestock

- Wildlife breeding farms
 - Restrict or [prohibit](#) outdoor-caged fur farms (i.e. mink, fox, raccoon dog farms)
 - Require monitoring and reporting, compensate for prohibiting the breeding of known and potential zoonotic risk wildlife
- Diseases in fish and wildlife
 - Support monitoring, study, and control strategies for disease in wildlife such as [chronic wasting disease](#) (CWD) and [aquatic zoonotic diseases](#)
 - Prohibit possession of ungulates originating from [outside the state](#)
 - Zoo wildlife: Support transmission/incidence monitoring and surveillance of COVID, vaccination of vulnerable animals
- Diseases in livestock
 - Establish a task force to monitor and evaluate 4H and county fair use of farm animals/livestock
 - Require a formal [biosecurity](#) plan for 4H and County Fair events
 - Reduce or regulate artificial points of host concentration such as feedlots



Develop wet market regulation and other food sanitation measures

- Clarify state definitions of “wet” vs. “live” markets
- Prohibit live animal market operators from selling known or likely invasive species or species of a taxa known to transmit zoonotic disease (CA [SB 376](#))
- Require wildlife agencies to create, update, and/or maintain a list of species known to transmit zoonotic disease
- Support alternative livelihood opportunities/social science and data collection to help facilitate any required transition away from wet markets



Facilitate robust funding options to prevent and combat wildlife disease

- Fund relevant agencies to test, report, respond to and mitigate zoonotic outbreaks
- Fund Public Health surveillance/monitoring/research and Epidemiology Departments
- Implement wildlife forensic funding in state budgets
- Increase funding for more inspection and enforcement of restrictions on animal trade

Contact

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