



REVIEW OF AUSTRALIA'S QUARANTINE AND BIOSECURITY SERVICES

SUBMISSION FROM AUSTRALASIAN REGIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ZOOLOGICAL PARKS AND AQUARIA (ARAZPA)

1 Background

ARAZPA is the professional association representing over 70 zoos and aquariums across Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific Islands. The Association advocates for the industry and provides a network for wildlife conservation, environmental education and wildlife research.

Zoological parks and aquariums operate across a broad spectrum of conservation activities. From ex situ breeding of threatened species, research, public education and advocacy programs, through to in situ support of species, populations and their habitats; we have a massive 'captive audience' of visitors whose knowledge, understanding, attitude, behaviour and involvement can all be positively influenced and harnessed.

ARAZPA members include zoos, aquariums and other wildlife facilities and institutions. Our members are either government-owned institutions, not-for-profit trusts and/or privately-owned, for profit zoos and aquariums. The below points highlight key information regarding ARAZPA that are of relevance to this submission:

- ARAZPA institutions hold more than 3,000 species, many of them endangered and/or threatened.
- ARAZPA institutions employ some of the most skilled veterinary professionals in Australia with highly developed skills and knowledge in wildlife diseases.
- As an integral part of the World Zoo Association (WAZA) movement ARAZPA members contribute to a complex system of the genetic management of endangered species. This work contributes to not only strengthening insurance populations of at risk in-situ animal populations but ensures the management of sustainable numbers of captive animals for advocacy purposes and therefore the highlighting of conservation/biodiversity issues.
- ARAZPA institutions are responsible for over AU\$186 million in recurrent annual expenditure and this expenditure is growing at 18.1% per annum.
- Each year, ARAZPA institutions invest over AU\$111 million in capital expenditure.
- Including flow-on economic activity, ARAZPA institutions contribute approximately AU\$510 million to the economy.
- ARAZPA institutions employ 3,246 paid staff and attract over 1,872 volunteers.
- ARAZPA institutions attract 14.5 million visitors per year, including over 2 million overseas visitors and 1.6 million formal school visits per year
- Zoos and aquariums contribute significantly to wildlife conservation with ARAZPA institutions contributing around \$6 million to programs conserving biodiversity in the wild.

2 ARAZPA members as Key Stakeholders

In order to properly manage the breeding and genetic make-up of zoo captive populations and to maximise conservation outcomes our members are reliant on international imports and exports of animals and animal matter (such as animal semen). Consequently ARAZPA members are a major stakeholder in quarantine and bio-security regulations and are subject to all government quarantine and biosecurity services.

Through the Australasian Species Management Program (ASMP), ARAZPA members have identified that the majority of captive exotic species held by member institutions are not genetically or numerically sustainable. In 2005 a paper presented to the region by Barlow and Hibbard (see attachment 1 – “Going, Going, Gone. A Zoo Without Exotic Mammals?” Barlow & Hibbard 2005) suggested that unless the resourcing of captive management programs and resolution to protracted legislative negotiations was improved it was likely that of 127 species held or planned for collections, only 38 would be in numbers considered to be viable as populations in the long term. This situation has not improved and it continues to be urgent that new genetic stock be introduced into Australian zoos to allow for the continuation of our programs into the future. “Additionally, while the crisis is immediately apparent in exotic mammals, these effects are being felt with exotic bird and reptiles species, and will increasingly impact native collections” (Barlow and Hibbard 2005).

Overall the Review Issues paper defines the appropriate level of protection for Australia as being very low level. Given the high levels of veterinary expertise and acceptance and high level practice of quarantine within many of our member institutions, zoo collection animals provide extraordinary low levels of risk. The expertise of zoo veterinarians and collaboration with member zoos at the State jurisdictional levels confirms this high level of expertise and practice.

3 Key Issues of Concern

The zoo industry has experienced substantial delays in the Import Risk Analysis (IRA) process. Examples include applications that remain outstanding with the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) in the areas of the Rodent IRA, Bovine IRA, Primate IRA and to a lesser extent elephant semen IRA.

Given the role and contribution of the zoo industry and in the context of the urgent situation faced by the industry in the sustainability of its captive populations it is submitted that DAFF should consider increased priority for importation of exotic animals.

There is discussion in the Issues paper about equivalence of risk management. The high levels of Australian quarantine requirements are commendable however this can create reluctance by overseas zoos to provide animals for the Australasian region. Of course, the ‘equivalence’ approach is only valid when the level of risk is the same between countries (thus the fact that Australia is trying to exclude diseases not present comes into play). Perhaps there is room for negotiation with respect to management of some taxa. (See Box 2, pp5,6 of Issues Paper).

Australian zoos are a significant resource for managing threatened species, and as a knowledge base in vital areas such as wildlife disease. There is a priority for the legislative framework to enable Australian zoos to reach their potential in these areas whilst not being detrimental to the health of Australia.

In canvassing ARAZPA members several more specific issues have been raised. In general, ARAZPA requests that the following issues be considered:

- The length of time to complete an IRA. As an example, the Primate IRA has been a work in progress for at least 8 years. The Bovid and Rodent IRAs are also examples of long and protracted applications that have still not been finalised.
- Limited resourcing of DAFF appears to be an ongoing issue. There appears a lack of staff available to progress matters, and/or staff being deployed to other issues.
- Looking at various consultative committees, and text in the Issues paper, there is no reference to the zoo industry as a stakeholder or being represented in consultations.
- Australia being free of many diseases provides an excellent opportunity for maintaining herds/groups of animals that are free from the same diseases in various other countries. This may be of benefit in managing endangered/threatened species, i.e. Australian zoos become internationally recognised for holding insurance populations of key species.
- Veterinary staff at ARAZPA zoos are well regarded globally, as are our Animal Husbandry standards. This provides opportunities for delivering training in wildlife disease management, effective disease control, and animal husbandry (animal welfare) for those working in range states eg South-east Asian countries. This may well contribute to education/awareness of disease transmission issues that ultimately benefit Australia
- The issue of 'very low level' but not zero risk requires further definition. It is the industry position that some of the concerns regarding the proposed importation of bovinds relate to very low levels of risk and could be resolved upon consultation.
- Increased priority should be given to the importation of zoo and exotic animals, with greater recognition of the economic, cultural and biodiversity-related importance of Australia's wildlife and zoo industry
- Clearer communication, consistency and focus within Australian state and federal organisations with a quarantine and biosecurity responsibility, and increased collaboration between Australian agencies and overseas agencies should occur to improve project progression and efficiencies for all parties.
- Appropriate responses to apparent emergence of exotic diseases (now commonly diagnosed in Australia), For example, avian diseases; Internal papillomatosis virus, Pacheco's Disease and Proventricular Dilatation Syndrome and Reptile diseases and Inclusion Body Disease of Boids (IBD) and Ophidian Paramyxovirus (OPMV). These diseases should be listed and treated as Notifiable Diseases as they are of great significance to both captive and free-ranging wildlife in Australia
- Increased support and prioritization for diagnostic laboratories should be provided when working with wildlife and exotic animal diseases within Australia
- Greater emphasis and increased recognition that quarantine and biosecurity issues involving Australian wildlife form part of the core business of the Australian Quarantine and Biosecurity agencies, and as such should be prioritized and supported as appropriate. In particular, there is a need for:
 - Greater understanding of the possible implications that a lack of wildlife disease awareness, investigation and response may hold for both Australia's unique biodiversity, Australian's tourism industry, Australia's production and related animal industries and for human health, both within Australia and globally. The poor and delayed response to wild bird deaths in the Esperance region of WA is one recent example of the inadequacies of the current situation.
 - Greater appreciation of the importance of gathering baseline information on wildlife disease issues

- Increased support for investigation and determination of wildlife disease issues when they emerge
- Increased post-border surveillance for exotic disease in wildlife (outside Quarantine Approved Premises)

4 Summary

ARAZPA and its member institutions fully appreciate the importance of maintaining Australia's status in Quarantine and Biosecurity. In doing so, the zoo industry wishes to be seen as a partner and stakeholder in the implementation of the processes required to achieve this. We urgently request that industry applications are progressed in a timely fashion. We also consider that the expertise of our industry professionals can more actively assist DAFF and the ongoing maintenance of standards and notification of wildlife disease. It is our position, that a robust DAFF infrastructure, with determined responsibilities, funding and support is necessary so that appropriate surveillance and/or active investigation of wildlife disease and health issues within Australia can occur.

ARAZPA and the zoo industry anticipate an opportunity to participate in the hearings with the Review team in coming months.

ARAZPA

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