

Guidelines for the Acquisition and Management of Felids (Cat Species) in Captivity adopted by Ministry of Environment in Pakistan : Short Review

- Reviewed by Editor

Background

The Ministry of Environment's CITES management authority in Pakistan is referred as the National Council for Conservation of Wildlife (NCCW). NCCW banned trade of felids since October 2008, considering the increasing number of CITES import permit requests from zoos and individuals. NCCW decided to first develop guidelines for the acquisition and captive management of felids before issuing any future CITES permits.

NCCW developed this keeping in view CITES itself; as per article III (3-b) of the CITES 'the Scientific authority is satisfied that the proposed recipient of a living specimen is suitably equipped to house and care for considering 3-b management standards these guidelines have been developed. This is a critical step because Pakistan does not have any specific zoo standards and husbandry guidelines. WWF-Pakistan was asked to develop the guidelines in the NCCW meeting in Feb 2009. NCCW shared the draft with the provincial wildlife authorities, after the thorough consultations and review. The guidelines were presented to the Federal Minister of Environment, Secretary Environment and NCCW council members 18 May and was approved on 30th June 2010.

Authors of the Guidelines:

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Summary of the Guidelines

NCCW being CITES management and scientific authority in Pakistan carries the duty to issue permits for import or export of CITES listed species and strengthen legal framework for its implementation. The Scientific Authority should be satisfied that the proposed recipient of a living individual (felid) is suitably equipped to house and care for it. Also that the individual is not to be used for primarily commercial purposes.

The guidelines were developed to control illegal trade of big cats and unjustified acquisition of animals for zoo exhibits, in aid of the higher objectives of conservation and education. These guidelines of NCCW prioritize cat species because they are listed under CITES I, II and are threatened globally. The guidelines cover registration of all zoos, private zoos (breeding farms



inclusive)/circuses/privately owned single species. The NCCW will cover details of the master plan, owner/administration, exhibits and facilities. If a facility already exists and does not have these pre-requisites then it must develop in a timely manner, as agreed.

Zoos are encouraged to exchange or loan felids and should demonstrate that they have tried before any sale or purchase is allowed and any time of sale or purchase will be carried out after the approval of NCCW and will be handled on a case by case basis. Felids can only be acquired through animal exchange with registered only with zoos that are members of a regional zoo association. Request for CITES permits must be made through the head of the relevant provincial wildlife department facilities (if within Pakistan). If outside of Pakistan then they can be acquired. Each zoo will develop their animal collection plan

and will take into account the level of expertise, space and resources required for the long term maintenance of a species. They will explore how a species has fared in other zoos both nationally and internationally. Also they should find out what conservation education message that a species will give visitors before deciding to take it into their collection.

The guidelines also cover protocols for wild caught felids, performing felids, disposal, management, breeding and maintaining studbooks. Minimum enclosure sizes for housing felids have been included suggesting minimum standard. Also zoos must have a full time education office, veterinary officer and animal keepers. These guidelines also stress that zoos should become active members of a regional zoo association that would help in coordinator and sharing of knowledge.