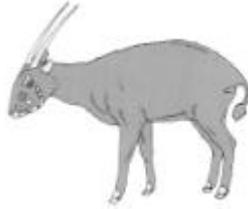


CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Seventeenth meeting of the Animals Committee
Hanoi (Viet Nam), 30 July-3 August 2001

Implementation of Resolution Conf. 11.16 regarding ranching operations

ANNUAL REPORTING ON CROCODILE RANCHING OPERATIONS

This document has been prepared by James Perran Ross, Executive Officer, IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group at the request of the Secretariat. The Secretariat has noted that very few Parties have complied with the recommendation in Resolution Conf. 11.16 to submit annual reports on ranching operations to the Secretariat, despite the serious implications of non-compliance outlined in second RECOMMENDS paragraph c) of the Resolution. Rather than reminding the Parties of this recommendation when the purpose of the reporting system is unclear, the Secretariat decided to further review this aspect of the Resolution and also to seek the input from the IUCN/SSC Crocodile Specialist Group and the Animals Committee regarding the value of the information that should be submitted in annual reports on ranching operations regarding the monitoring of such operations. The contribution from Dr Ross is greatly appreciated.

Origin of the reporting requirement

1. The original Resolution Conf. 3.15 on ranching recommended that Parties with ranching operations report to the Secretariat "...in sufficient detail concerning the status of its population and concerning the performance of the ranching operation..." [Resolution Conf. 3.15 under Recommends c) vi)]. Ranching programmes are expected to meet a higher standard of conservation value than other transfers from Appendix I to II. Ranching operations must be "primarily beneficial" to wild populations and the status of wild populations subject to ranching must be monitored. At the time of the adoption of this Resolution (1981) ranching was a new and radical procedure and special restraints and oversight were thought necessary. Reporting requirements were made specific in Resolution Conf. 5.16 and particularly Resolution Conf. 6.22 on ranching and trade in ranched specimens (repealed by Resolution Conf. 11.16), where a list of seven topics for reporting was defined that has passed through all subsequent revisions and consolidations and remains the current guideline for ranching reports in Resolution Conf. 11.16. and is quoted here (see also Annex):

"RECOMMENDS that:

- a) *annual reports on all relevant aspects of each approved ranching operation be submitted to the Secretariat by the Party concerned, and include any new information on the following:*

- i) the status of the wild population concerned;*
- ii) the number of specimens (eggs, young or adults) taken annually from the wild;*
- iii) an estimate of the percentage of the production of the wild population that is taken for the ranching operation;*
- iv) the number of animals released and their survival rates estimated on the basis of surveys and tagging programmes, if any;*
- v) the mortality rate in captivity and causes of such mortality;*
- vi) production, sales and exports of products; and*
- vii) conservation programmes and scientific experiments carried out in relation to the ranching operation or the wild population concerned".*

Goals of reporting

2. The rather thorough reporting needs were a response to two concerns about opening trade in ranched specimens of what were previously Appendix-I species. Firstly there was a concern that the higher standard of "primarily beneficial" needed to be continually affirmed. Secondly, there were explicit concerns that ranches would serve as conduits through which illegally acquired Appendix I specimens could be introduced to international trade. The detailed reporting requirement, coupled with the extensive product labelling provisions developed in Resolution Conf. 5.16 and subsequent revisions, were intended to make laundering through ranches difficult to conduct and easy to detect.
3. The basic questions to be answered by ranching programme reports therefore address two goals in two different components of the programme:
 - a) In the wild population, does the necessary condition of "primarily beneficial" continue to be met?
 - and;
 - b) In ranching operations, is there a transparent mechanism to ensure that illegally acquired wild specimens are not laundered through ranches?
4. The reporting provisions in sub-paragraphs i) – iv) and vii) of the Resolution generally address the first question and provisions in sub-paragraphs ii) and v) – vi) the second.
5. In the two decades since these principles were first articulated, ranching has become a widespread and successful activity for a few species and CITES has greatly modified both its approach to use of wild species and the mechanisms for changing their CITES status. It is an appropriate time to examine whether the original needs still apply and are being adequately met.

Problems with the reporting requirement for ranching

6. The basic problem with the reporting requirement is that it has rarely, if ever, been adhered to. Managers of ranching programmes throughout the world that are successful and recognized as meeting the conservation requirements, are apparently unwilling or unable to submit the information that should be reported in terms of Resolution Conf. 11.16. In order to be effective, the reporting requirement must balance simplicity and ease of preparation

with effectiveness at meeting the dual goals. The current requirement is, by demonstrated non-compliance, not properly balanced.

7. Additionally, confusion has arisen because newer ranching programmes can be established for Appendix II-species not transferred from Appendix I under Resolution Conf. 9.24 Annex 4, paragraph B.2 e) and these are not held to the higher standard of 'primarily beneficial' and are not subject to the reporting requirement of Resolution Conf. 11.16. Standardized simple reporting for all ranching programmes (and indeed, for all wild use programmes) is desirable.

Analysis of the current requirements.

8. Each of the seven topics currently required to be included in ranching reports has different inherent difficulties and also quite variable effectiveness at addressing the goals. In the following section each topic is discussed.

- a) The status of the wild population concerned:

A requirement to determine the status of the wild populations is fundamental for ranching programmes and is now incorporated into monitoring provisions of the regular downlisting process (Resolution Conf. 9.24). Recognition of the effectiveness of adaptive management regimes and responsiveness to observed changes in population status are now basic to species management and conservation. This provision is probably also the most onerous, expensive and time-consuming activity in population management. However, Parties have flexibility to develop techniques and timing of monitoring that suit their needs and capacity. There is also a generally accepted balance between the intensity of use (e.g. removal of specimens for ranching) and monitoring needs. Where offtakes amount to a small proportion of the population, monitoring can be infrequent and be of low precision. When offtakes amount to a high proportion, monitoring must be appropriately more intense and more precise. This reporting provision should therefore be retained as a basic management tool of Parties and a necessary component of reports to the Secretariat. Note also however that Resolution Conf. 11.16 only recommends reporting of "new" information. Therefore, if monitoring is not annual, reports only need reflect new and updated information, trends and estimates.

- b) The number of specimens (eggs, young or adults) taken annually from the wild;

Recording of this information appears to be a relatively easy piece of book-keeping. Every effective ranching operator must retain this information and centralizing and reporting these data should be simple. Some difficulty may result from the seasonal nature of specimen collection (e.g. occurring across the transition from one calendar year to the next) but solutions to this problem are routine in accounting and other reporting processes and the same simplifying mechanisms can be used. The number of specimens removed from the wild, considered together with specimens entering trade, and the status of the population, provide a basic yardstick to assess how a programme is operating.

- c) An estimate of the percentage of the production of the wild population that is taken for the ranching operation;

This is theoretically possible by combining information from a) and b) above but in practice is neither easy nor particularly valuable. Many monitoring programmes use relative indices of abundance and do not estimate absolute numbers. Percentage extraction of specimens may be the basis of sustainable use programmes but these are

more often in the form of goals based on computer and mathematical population simulations, rather than actual prescriptions for use. In theory, if monitoring is sufficiently precise, then the response of the population to any extraction rate will become quickly evident. Therefore, if 'status' in a) above is properly addressed, this reporting requirement is not necessary.

- d) The number of animals released and their survival rates estimated on the basis of surveys and tagging programmes, if any;

This provision only applies in the case of a re-introduction programme as part of the ranching programme. There is no unanimity about the necessity or effectiveness of reintroduction programmes and many successful ranching operations demonstrate being 'primarily beneficial' in terms of population stability and habitat protection, without them. This reporting provision is therefore optional and more a matter of national evaluation of the programme.

- e) The mortality rate in captivity and causes of such mortality;

This provision, combined with b) above and f) below, provides an effective way of accounting for specimens introduced to the ranch. Major discrepancies in the reported numbers may indicate the illegal introduction of wild specimens into the trade stream. This information is valuable to Management Authority and enforcement agencies within a Party in making a non-detriment finding to issue permits. However, it is difficult for the Secretariat or the Standing Committee to evaluate such data or act upon them. Its utility therefore lies at the level of national control.

- f) Production, sales and exports of products;

Production and export information is routinely collected for other purposes (permit issuance, taxation, licensing, trade statistics). Common problems with this information are lack of uniformity of reporting units, timeliness and distortion to avoid taxation. However, used in conjunction with b) and a) above, these data do assist the evaluation of a ranching programme's compliance to the Resolutions. Sales data appear to be redundant and uninformative to either CITES goal.

- g) Conservation programmes and scientific experiments carried out in relation to the ranching operation or the wild population concerned.

As there is no requirement to undertake such programmes, the presence or absence of this information does not assist the Secretariat or the Standing Committee to address non-compliance with the Resolutions. Conservation programmes and scientific experiments nevertheless provide a Party with an opportunity to showcase successful conservation action and "benefit". This information would only apply to "new" data and is more productively reported in refereed literature, internal reports, press and media etc.

- 9. Resolution Conf. 11.16 provides that the information in these reports can be the basis for intervention by the CITES Standing Committee to ensure compliance with the Resolutions or to return the population to Appendix I. However, the provisions of Resolution Conf. 8.9 (Rev.) on the Review of Significant Trade have generalized this process so that specific intervention under the ranching Resolution is now redundant.

The solution, a simplified reporting requirement recommendation

10. From these analyses and considerations it can be concluded that the reporting provision on ranching operations as part of annual reports by Parties to the CITES Secretariat can be simplified to the following:
- a) The status of the wild population concerned;
(Established by monitoring at an appropriate frequency and with sufficient precision to allow recognition of changes in population trend due to ranching);
 - b) The number of specimens (eggs, young or adults) taken annually from the wild; and
 - c) Production and exports of products.
11. This is sufficient information to Parties to evaluate their own programmes and allow the CITES Secretariat and Standing Committee to monitor ranching programmes sufficiently and the Animals Committee to include a species in its Review of Significant Trade should problems be detected.
12. Information on the following topics may assist national authorities to assess the effectiveness of their own programmes, and in conjunction with information above, to determine whether ranching operations operate legally and without detriment to wild populations, but need not be transmitted to CITES Secretariat annually:
- a) An estimate of the percentage of the production of the wild population that is taken for the ranching operation;
 - b) The number of animals released and their survival rates estimated on the basis of surveys and tagging programmes, if any;
 - c) The mortality rate in captivity and causes of such mortality; and
 - d) Conservation programmes and scientific experiments carried out in relation to the ranching operation or the wild population concerned.

Comments from the Secretariat

13. The Secretariat largely concurs with the analysis and recommendations contained in this document, but disagrees that the requirement for data on sales are "redundant and uninformative to either CITES goal". Data on sales are useful to complement data on acquisitions, as frequently recommended to Management Authorities regarding the monitoring of captive breeding operations. Such data are, however, more useful at the national level for supervision and enforcement purposes than for the Secretariat.
14. The purpose of submitting annual reports on ranching operations to the Secretariat is not clear. The submission of annual reports does not appear to be linked to the Secretariat's role in RECOMMENDS paragraph i) of the Resolution, i.e. to determine whether changes in the ranching programme would result in substantial changes to the management of the species, as RECOMMENDS paragraph h) requires that the Secretariat be informed about changes in management with reference to a different set of information than required in the annual reports on ranching operations. It can be argued that the annual reporting system to the Secretariat is therefore entirely redundant (but would remain useful at national level).

15. Regarding paragraph 9, it is still unclear why Parties have to report any information specific to each ranching operation to the Secretariat, when such information is most useful at national level for the monitoring of registered operations and the implementation of Article IV concerning exports. The Resolution does not indicate the purpose of annual reporting and the other functions assigned to the Secretariat can be performed irrespective of these reports. The Secretariat believes therefore that the Resolution can be further simplified by removing this reporting requirement entirely. Unless compelling arguments to the contrary are presented, it will propose to amend the Resolution accordingly.

Resolution Conf. 11.16
Ranching and trade in ranched specimens of species
transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II

RECALLING Resolution Conf. 5.16 (Rev.), adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting (Buenos Aires, 1985) and amended at its 10th meeting (Harare, 1997), and Resolution Conf. 10.18 adopted at its 10th meeting;

NOTING that the terms of Resolution Conf. 10.16 (Rev.) on specimens of animal species bred in captivity, adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 10th meeting (Harare, 1997) and amended at its 11th meeting (Gigiri, 2000), do not allow the entry into trade of specimens of species included in Appendix I that have been taken from the wild and reared in captivity, except in accordance with the provisions of Article III of the Convention;

RECOGNIZING that some successful programmes for the conservation of certain species permit specimens of those species into international trade on the basis that such trade is no longer detrimental to the survival of their wild populations;

RECALLING Resolution Conf. 9.6 (Rev.), adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its ninth meeting (Fort Lauderdale, 1994) and amended at its 11th meeting (Gigiri, 2000), which recommends that Parties consider all products of ranching operations to be readily recognizable;

RECOGNIZING that marking of parts and derivatives in trade from ranched animals is necessary to achieve adequate control;

RECOGNIZING that, if each Party establishes a different marking system for parts and derivatives of ranched animals of the same species, confusion will result and enforcement will be difficult;

BELIEVING that any proposal to transfer to Appendix II, for ranching, a species for which such a proposal has previously been approved should be consistent with the approved proposal in its intent and in the terms and conditions it specifies;

RECOGNIZING that, in accordance with Article XIV of the Convention, Parties may adopt more restrictive domestic controls on trade in specimens of populations included in the Appendices;

CONSIDERING the necessity of transferring populations back to Appendix I if it is established that ranching operations utilizing them no longer meet the criteria;

AWARE that ranching of crocodylians on the basis of controlled collection of eggs or hatchlings can be potentially a valuable and positive conservation tool, whereas taking of wild adult animals needs stricter control;

CONSCIOUS of the danger of providing greater incentives for the establishment of captive-breeding operations, which may damage efforts to conserve wild populations, than for ranching operations, which in principle are more beneficial to crocodylian conservation;

EMPHASIZING that the overriding objective of the Convention is to conserve wild populations of the species listed in the Appendices and that positive incentives must be offered to programmes designed to achieve this aim;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

Regarding definitions

DECIDES that:

- a) the term 'ranching' means the rearing in a controlled environment of specimens taken from the wild; and
- b) the term 'uniform marking system' means a system of marking each product approved by the Conference of the Parties for a species, which, as a minimum, includes the International Organization for Standardization two-letter code for the country of origin, a unique identification number and the year of production or, for products in stock or manufactured from products of the operation in stock at the time of the proposal, the year of approval of the proposal;

Regarding proposals to transfer populations from Appendix I to Appendix II for ranching

RECOMMENDS that:

- a) populations of species included in Appendix I that occur within the jurisdiction of Parties and are deemed by the Conference of the Parties to be no longer endangered and to benefit by ranching with the intention of trade be included in Appendix II;
- b) in order to be considered by the Conference of the Parties, any proposal to transfer a population to Appendix II in order to conduct a ranching programme satisfy the following general criteria:
 - i) the programme must be primarily beneficial to the conservation of the local population (i.e., where applicable, contribute to its increase in the wild or promote protection of the species's habitat while maintaining a stable population);
 - ii) all products (including live specimens) of each operation must be adequately identified and documented to ensure that they can be readily distinguished from products of Appendix-I populations;
 - iii) the programme must have in place appropriate inventories, harvest-level controls and mechanisms to monitor the wild populations; and
 - iv) there must be sufficient safeguards established in the programme to ensure that adequate numbers of animals are returned to the wild if necessary and where appropriate;
- c) any Party submitting a ranching proposal for a population of a species, whether or not a ranching proposal has been approved for the species previously, include in the proposal the following, in addition to the usual biological data requested for proposals to amend the Appendices:
 - i) details of its marking system that should meet the minimum requirements of the uniform marking system defined in this Resolution;

- ii) a list specifying the types of products produced by the operation;
 - iii) a description of the methods that will be used to mark all products and containers entered into trade; and
 - iv) an inventory of current stocks of specimens of the species concerned, whether or not they are from the ranching operation;
- d) any proposal for the transfer to Appendix II of a Party's population or a smaller geographically separate population of a species, for the purpose of ranching, not be approved by the Conference unless it contains the following:
- i) evidence that the taking from the wild will have no significant detrimental impact on wild populations;
 - ii) an assessment of the likelihood of the biological and economic success of each ranching operation;
 - iii) assurance that the operation shall be carried out at all stages in a humane (non-cruel) manner;
 - iv) documented evidence to demonstrate that the programme is beneficial to the wild population through reintroduction or in other ways; and
 - v) assurance that the criteria specified in paragraph b) above under 'RECOMMENDS' shall continue to be met;
- e) in order to be discussed at the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties, any proposal for amendment of the Appendices pursuant to this Resolution be received by the Secretariat at least 330 days before that meeting. In consultation with the Animals Committee, the Secretariat shall seek appropriate scientific and technical advice to verify that the criteria specified in paragraph d) above under 'RECOMMENDS' have been met and to review the information and assurances in the proposal that are specified in paragraph d) above. If in the opinion of the Secretariat further information concerning the criteria is required, the Secretariat shall request information from the proposing Party within 150 days after receipt. Thereafter, the Secretariat shall communicate with the Parties in accordance with Article XV of the Convention;
- f) proposals that include a component of a wild-adult harvest be examined much more stringently than those based purely on collection of eggs, neonates, larvae or other juvenile life stages;
- g) Parties achieving or having achieved the transfer of their populations of a species to Appendix II under the provisions of this Resolution limit the manner of exploitation of wild populations to those techniques described in their proposals and not, for example, later initiate new short-term programmes for taking wild animals without notifying the Secretariat;
- h) any Party with an approved ranching proposal submit any changes to the information supplied in paragraph c) above under 'RECOMMENDS' to the Secretariat. The Secretariat, in consultation with the Animals Committee, should determine whether the changes proposed substantially alter the original ranching programme, and undermine or jeopardize the conservation of the wild population. The Secretariat should advise the Party of its determination accordingly; and

- i) in cases where the Secretariat, in consultation with the Animals Committee, concludes that changes to the ranching programme that are proposed in accordance with paragraph h) would result in substantial changes to management of the species, the proposed management be treated as a new proposal, requiring the submission of a proposal pursuant to this Resolution and to the requirements of Article XV of the Convention;

Regarding trade in ranched specimens of species transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II

RECOMMENDS that all Parties prohibit trade in products of ranching operations unless such trade complies with all the terms, conditions and requirements of the approved ranching proposal for the population concerned;

Regarding monitoring and reporting in relation to species transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II for ranching

RECOMMENDS that:

- a) annual reports on all relevant aspects of each approved ranching operation be submitted to the Secretariat by the Party concerned, and include any new information on the following:
 - i) the status of the wild population concerned;
 - ii) the number of specimens (eggs, young or adults) taken annually from the wild;
 - iii) an estimate of the percentage of the production of the wild population that is taken for the ranching operation;
 - iv) the number of animals released and their survival rates estimated on the basis of surveys and tagging programmes, if any;
 - v) the mortality rate in captivity and causes of such mortality;
 - vi) production, sales and exports of products; and
 - vii) conservation programmes and scientific experiments carried out in relation to the ranching operation or the wild population concerned;
- b) with the consent of the Standing Committee and the Party concerned, the Secretariat should have the option to visit and examine a ranching operation wherever circumstances require it to do so; and
- c) where the Secretariat reports failure to comply with this Resolution, and the Standing Committee and the Party concerned fail to resolve the matter satisfactorily, the Standing Committee may, after full consultation with the Party concerned, request the Depositary Government to prepare a proposal to transfer the population concerned back to Appendix I; and

REPEALS the Resolutions listed hereunder:

- a) Resolution Conf. 5.16 (Rev.) (Buenos Aires, 1985, as amended at Harare, 1997) – Trade in ranched specimens; and
- b) Resolution Conf. 10.18 (Harare, 1997) – Ranching and trade in ranched specimens.