Fish Veterinary Society position statement on

Wild Collection of Aquatic Animals

Recent calls to restrict the sourcing of wild-collected animals for both the pet trade and zoos have caused the Society to review the current evidence. It is important that FVS continue to promote the welfare of aquatic animals whilst also considering a One Health approach to the wider implications for conservation and communities that depend on wild collection for their livelihoods. Many less developed countries and poorer regions are involved in catching marine and freshwater fish to supply live to the UK home and public aquarium industry because these species cannot be bred in captivity at present. Due to the market need for aquatic animals that are healthy and free from stress, methods used to capture individuals are typically of low environmental impact, such as handheld nets and live traps. As such, wild collection provides revenue to local communities that otherwise might use more environmentally damaging income streams such as trawl fishing, coral mining, and logging. Maintaining these benefits for people and wildlife, whilst ensuring the welfare of aquatic animals, is key. The FVS therefore supports:

- the use of capture techniques that minimise stress on individual animals
- the use of capture techniques that are environmentally sustainable and do not damage the local habitat
- sustainable use of aquatic resources so that fish stocks are not depleted
- active conservation programs to preserve and improve local habitats in source countries
- the development of captive breeding programs with high welfare standards
- compliance with regulation and legislation, both national and international, related to wild capture of aquatic animals
- the requirement that all animals are transported to IATA standards to ensure that all their welfare needs are met
- measures to ensure that all live aquatic animals are kept in a way that meets their five welfare needs and that they experience a 'Life Worth Living'.

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