

Pet Advocacy Network Member Update on International Issues from the 33rd CITES Animals Committee Meeting

Geneva, Switzerland – Bob Likins, Chief Operating Officer of the Pet Advocacy Network (PAN), is pleased to provide an update on key international issues discussed during the recent 33rd meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) Animals Committee. This meeting addressed several matters of significant concern to the responsible pet trade community.

Stoney Corals:

For over a decade, the issue of stoney corals has been a recurring topic at CITES meetings. Industry representatives successfully engaged in discussions to update and clarify definitions for coral products, reflecting advancements where manmade products have replaced dead coral in some instances.

More critically, the proposal to quantify coral shipments by weight, pushed by Australia, was met with concern from trade organizations, including PAN. The measure, if adopted, would grossly overestimate the amount of coral being traded by including the weight of water and substrate. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of trade representatives working with the delegations from Canada and the United States, the current method of measuring by the number of specimens will remain in place, though future discussions to further refine how shipments are measured are likely.

Seahorses:

Seahorses have also been a longstanding subject of discussion at CITES meetings. Through continued engagement, the pet trade has helped shift the narrative, with the focus now on bycatch from food fishing operations rather than the pet trade. Additionally, the success of captive breeding programs, which now supply many seahorses to the trade, is widely recognized.

Marine Ornamentals Workshop:

The pet trade community is defending the integrity of the marine ornamentals workshop findings. Although the workshop presented multiple models for assessing species threats, no consensus was reached on which model is best. Unfortunately, some anti-trade organizations and parties have misrepresented the workshop results, asserting that a short list of species was being recommended for CITES listing. While the final report from the Animals Committee is something that we can live with, it is neither ideal nor an accurate representation of the

workshop's decisions. PAN will continue to advocate for accurate representation of workshop outcomes as the upcoming Conference of the Parties in 2025 approaches.

Trade in Captive Specimens:

A concerning issue arose during discussions on trade in animal specimens produced in captivity, specifically regarding founder stock. A suggestion was made to retroactively judge the conservation impact of founder stock obtained prior to a CITES listing. This could lead to arbitrary retroactive application of CITES restrictions. Fortunately, thanks to pre-meeting discussions and the efforts of the working group chair, the debate remained focused on the group's original mandate.

Opposition to Trade in Wild Animals:

Organizations and parties opposed to the trade in live animals continue to push for expanded CITES efforts on non-listed species. They advocate for workshops and work that produce lists of species, which they then misrepresent as recommendations for CITES listings. PAN, alongside organizations like Ornamental Fish International, Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association, European Pet Organization, and the Sustainable Use Coalition, remains committed to defending responsible trade practices and smart conservation.

As we participate in these crucial discussions, it is essential to recognize the collaborative efforts of our partners. Together, we stand strong in advocating for the responsible pet trade.

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