



RESOLUTION NUMBER: 28

APPROVED

SOURCE:

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND RABIES

SUBJECT MATTER:

Wildlife Translocation: A Threat to Rabies Management and Elimination Programs

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Intentional and accidental translocation of meso-carnivores can result in significant management challenges and seriously threatens wildlife rabies management initiatives being implemented by the Wildlife Services (WS) National Rabies Management Program (NRMP) and its international, national, and state partners. Translocation often occurs as a response to human-wildlife conflicts. The intentional relocation of raccoons, skunks, foxes, and coyotes is typically carried out by the public, nuisance wildlife control operators, wildlife rehabilitators, and others to move nuisance or rehabilitated animals away from the site of capture. Accidental translocation (hitch-hikers) by vehicle, boat, or airplane may result in local, interstate, or international movement that can facilitate the spread of rabies. Raccoon rabies was documented again in Ontario Canada last fall after more than 10 years of being raccoon rabies free. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources immediately implemented a contingency action plan to control, minimize, and work to eliminate the outbreak. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency in Ottawa, Canada determined by DNA sequence of the raccoon rabies isolate that the likely origin was from southeastern New York State or New York City and it probably reached Ontario by translocation. Recently, several confirmed raccoon translocation events occurred in states where oral rabies vaccination (ORV) programs were being conducted to stop the spread of raccoon rabies, underscoring potential impacts on broad scale rabies management programs in 15 states.

State fish and wildlife agencies have legal jurisdiction and management authority over the common rabies vector species (RVS) in the United States. The South Eastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Fur Working Group (FWG) developed recommendations for their respective state agencies that are attempting to prevent the spread of rabies by RVS. The FWG developed Best Management Practices (BMP) for various user groups, wildlife damage control agencies, wildlife rehabilitators, trappers, and the general public that may encounter RVS. The BMPs are sound and work on the basis that no RVS should be relocated or translocated, but instead should be released at the capture site or humanely euthanized. Many states allow user groups to release RVS away from the original site of capture and state laws and regulations vary greatly on the legality of transporting across state lines.

Translocation of RVS can result in significant costs to cooperative ORV programs that have to implement contingency actions to reestablish raccoon rabies free areas once raccoon rabies outbreaks occur. The development and implementation of a comprehensive public education strategy in concert with aggressive enforcement of state and local regulations prohibiting translocation of meso-carnivores is essential to reduce the economic burden of translocation of RVS.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association requests that the United States Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services collaborate with local, state, and international partners to promote and, where legal and practical, implement the Best Management Practices for common rabies vector species developed by the South Eastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.