‘Not all species are suitable as pets’
FVE calls for the establishment of suitability lists in Europe

Brussels, 26 November 2013

Crocodiles, chimpanzees, cobras - preliminary results of a recent survey show there has been an increase in the number of wild animals and other exotic species kept as companion animals. This trend raises concerns about animal health and welfare as well as public health and the environment.

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is of the opinion that some species are completely unsuitable for being kept by the general public. The Federation fully supports the principle of drafting so-called ‘suitability lists’, which specify the species that can (or cannot) be kept by private individuals.

FVE calls for competent authorities to work towards the establishment of such lists, based on a thorough scientific assessment of the risks to the animal itself, its owners and the society, as well as the potential impact on the indigenous species and ecosystems should the animal be released or escape.

Belgium and the Netherlands have already established so-called ‘positive’ lists, which specify the species that can be kept by private individuals, while other countries have a ‘negative list’ of species that are banned from being kept as pets.

FVE President Christophe Buhot commented “The establishment of positive lists in European countries represents a manageable, proportionate and effective regulatory process” and urged European countries to follow their example.

However, regardless of the type of list, he stressed the importance for competent authorities to focus on the problem, and draft legislation that would effectively approve or prohibit certain species from being kept as companion animals.

The potential risks of animals that are unsuitable as pets were highlighted during two major events in which FVE participated. In October 2012, FVE organised a conference on “Import and keeping of exotic animals in Europe”, in association with the Cyprus Presidency, the European Commission and the Swiss Federal Veterinary Office.

Then, following the conference ‘Wild Animals in Captivity – Animal Welfare, Law and Enforcement’ in June, and in collaboration with the Born Free foundation, the FVE has prepared a survey on Exotic animals in veterinary practice, to assess the degree of exposure
to exotic companion animals by veterinary practitioners. Over 2,800 replies have been received so far, and are currently being analyzed.

Read the complete FVE position here.

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Notes to editors

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is an umbrella organisation of 44 veterinary organisations from 38 European countries, representing a total of around 240 000 veterinarians.

For further information, consult the FVE website http://www.fve.org or contact the FVE Secretariat on Tel +32 2 533 70 20 or by e-mail to info@fve.org.