

BUAV call on the UK Government to stop supporting the trade in wild-caught monkeys for research

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The BUAV has launched a campaign for a change in the law to ban the import of the offspring of wild-caught primates into the UK for research purposes, and prohibit all imports from facilities which trap wild primates for breeding purposes.

The UK already has a ban on the use of wild-caught primates for research. According to Meg Hillier, the previous Home Office Minister, “Since 1997, we in the UK have not been accepting wild captured animals, only using captive-bred ones—that is F1—and some F2.”

F1 generation primates are those who are born in captivity; F2 generation primates are those who are bred in captivity within their country of origin. Overseas suppliers of primates to UK laboratories require prior approval from the Home Office which is supposed to be given only if the conditions at the supply and breeding centres, where the animals originate, are considered acceptable to the Home Office.

Whilst it might appear to the public that the current regulations afford adequate protection for primates living in their natural habitats in the wild, the BUAV has found that breeding colonies often trap animals

from the wild. Primates born to wild-caught parents and those exported from farms which continue to trap wild primates for breeding purposes continue to be allowed into the country. By doing so, the BUAV believes that the UK is perpetrating a trade that centres on the cruel trapping of wild animals.

The scale of the problem is significant. Between 2008 and 2009

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almost 5,000 primates were imported into the UK for research purposes; the majority being long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*) from Mauritius, a country that was the focus of an investigation carried out by the BUAV earlier this year. In answers to Parliamentary questions tabled by Henry Smith MP, former Home Office Minister Lynn Featherstone has stated that since 2009, 2,227 long-tailed macaques who were

born to wild-caught parents have been imported into the UK¹.

The BUAV has undertaken numerous field investigations into the international trade in primates for research. Evidence obtained invariably reveals the immense suffering inflicted on primates during their capture, caging, holding and transportation for the research industry. The BUAV investigation in Mauritius obtained shocking evidence of the cruelty and suffering involved in the trapping and breeding of wild long-tailed macaques. This primate species - the most widely imported and used in research - is listed in Appendix II of CITES (Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species).

In Mauritius, the monkeys are caught in gang or individual traps. BUAV investigators were told that trapped monkeys sustain injuries and broken limbs during trapping and transferral to transit cages. One young monkey with injuries was routinely taken from his cage by a trapper (who at the time worked for the company Noveprim) and tormented by being swung around in the air by his tail.

Footage obtained from inside one farm for Bioculture, another major primate company in Mauritius,

shows the extremely stressful methods of capture used which can potentially be harmful to the monkeys. Monkeys, frantic to escape, were grabbed and pulled by their tails by workers trying to capture them from pens prior to export.

Additionally, unlike the offspring of many other mammals, infant primates have a long period of dependence and development which requires an extended period of maternal care. In the wild, primates normally remain within their family group for many years. Natural weaning is a gradual process. Forcibly separating infants from their mothers is an extremely distressing experience for both the mother and infant.

The substantial negative impact caused by the trapping and removal of wild primates from their natural social groups is universally recognised by a number of organisations and official bodies, including the UK government's own advisory committee, the Animal Procedures Committee:

*"Trapping wild primates can cause significant distress, suffering and physical injury."*²

However recent proposals by the European Commission to ban the import of wild-caught and captive born primates into the EU were vigorously lobbied against by the animal research industry. The proposals were subsequently dropped from the final revision of the EU Directive on animal experimentation.

British MPs are therefore calling on the Government to ban the import of the offspring of wild-caught primates into the UK for research purposes, and prohibit all imports from facilities which trap wild primates for breeding purposes. The news will have huge implications for Mauritius, the UK's main supplier of such primates.

Questions have been tabled in the Houses of Parliament about the import of primates from Mauritius and an Early Day Motion tabled by Caroline Lucas, Leader of the Green Party, is calling on the Government to completely disassociate itself from the cruel trade in wild-caught primates for research. Caroline Lucas, MP has stated:

"I am calling on the Government to make real efforts to distance itself from the continued practice of using wild-caught nonhuman primates in research. As investigative work by the BUAV has shown, this trade inflicts unnecessary suffering and is

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inherently cruel. The British people have a strong instinct when it comes to animal cruelty and it's clear that this level of animal abuse will not be tolerated. The Government must

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therefore do more to take the lead in modern, humane medical research without animal suffering - and ban the import of wild-caught offspring for research."

Henry Smith MP who recently tabled parliamentary questions on this issue has also stated: *"I felt compelled to raise at the highest levels the disturbing capture and importation of non-human primates in to the UK for research purposes. I think many people in this country will be deeply concerned at the scale and unnecessary suffering caused by this cruel trade. By highlighting this issue I hope we can bring about awareness and change."*

The BUAV is calling upon the UK Government to dissociate the UK from this cruelty; and the government of Mauritius to take immediate action by banning the trapping and export of its primate population.

1) http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101104/text/101104w0001.htm#q_7

2) European Union Committee Sub-committee D (Environment and Agriculture), Inquiry into the Revision of the Directive on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes:

Summary of evidence submitted by the Animal Procedures Committee
http://apc.homeoffice.gov.uk/reference/apc_response_house_of_lords.pdf