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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

35th meeting
Strasbourg, 1-4 December 2015

**RECOMMENDATION No. 176 (2015) ON THE
PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF THE
BATRACHOCHYTRIUM SALAMANDRIVORANS CHYTRID
*FUNGUS***

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prepared by
the Directorate of Democratic Governance*



Convention on the Conservation
of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

Recommendation No. 176 (2015) of the Standing Committee, adopted on 4 December 2015, on the prevention and control of the *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* chytrid fungus

The Standing Committee to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, acting under the terms of Article 14 of the Convention,

Having regard to the aims of the convention, which are to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats;

Recalling that Article 3 of the convention requires Parties to take the necessary steps to promote national policies for the conservation of wild flora, wild fauna and natural habitats, with particular attention to endangered and vulnerable species, especially endemic ones, and endangered habitats;

Stressing that according to the [Global Amphibian Assessment \(GAA\)](#), 43% of amphibian species are declining in populations, and 32% are threatened;

Noting that emerging fungal and fungal-like diseases are an increasingly important threat, causing population declines and extinctions of amphibians, the most threatened class of vertebrates;

Taking note with apprehension of the mass mortality and massive population declines (96% decline) in populations of *Salamandra salamandra* in the Netherlands caused by a novel chytrid fungus, the *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans*;

Worried about the fact that once the *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* emerges in an area there is no method to mitigate its effects or to treat amphibian populations against it, making this fungal disease likely to have devastating effect on European salamander and newt biodiversity;

Noting that the disease is native of Asia and that it was introduced into Europe through the importing of exotic species mainly for pet trade purposes;

Recalling that the epidemiological impact of the trade is significant and may negatively affect conservation and trade economics;

Recalling that under Article 11, paragraph 2.b of the Convention, each Contracting Party undertakes to strictly control the introduction of non-native species;

Recalling [Recommendation No. 99 \(2003\)](#) of the Standing Committee on the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species (IAS);

Aware that there are bio-security risks associated to importing animals the provenance and pathogens of which may be unknown;

Recalling the CBD Technical Series No. 48 on [Pets, Aquarium, and Terrarium Species: Best Practices for Addressing Risks to Biodiversity](#), which notes that there are significant gaps in global regulations of infectious disease and suggests risk assessment and screening approaches to potentially invasive pathogens;

Further recalling the [Best Practices in Pre-Import Risk Screening for Species of Live Animals in International Trade](#), prepared by the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) focussing on “best

practices” to address the risks associated with imports of live non-native animals and their parasites and pathogens in international trade;

Aware that pet trade may not necessarily be the only pathway of introduction of the *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* in Europe;

Noting that it is extremely important that the spread of the *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* is halted or at least slowed down and that the introduction into a *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans*-negative region is prevented;

Stressing that the disease may spread across countries and that its effective prevention and control will necessarily require transnational cooperation and coordinated response to new outbreaks,

Recommends that Contracting Parties:

1. Apply biosafety rules to field-work (including licenses where appropriate), to visitors of breeding sites of fire salamander and newts, and to the conservation and captive collections of amphibians, against known or emerging pathogens that may be introduced – inter alia – through animal trade, and against the *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* as a matter of urgency. In order to ensure the implementation of biosafety measures in all relevant conservation programmes, effective protocols for the treatment of amphibians affected by the *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* should be developed and their prompt, wide and free circulation between Contracting Parties guaranteed;
2. Carry out appropriate science-based pre-import risk screening for infectious diseases of live animals in animal trade;
3. Impose immediate restrictions on salamander and newt trade while a scientific risk assessment is being developed and until necessary measures are designed, as a preventive measure against the introduction of *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* through pet trade;
4. Establish monitoring programmes to control the possible further spread of the disease, with the view of developing an early warning system for pan-Europe and enable the quick detection of disease driven loss of biodiversity;
5. Establish, as a matter of urgency, monitoring programs for salamander and newt populations in areas of high risk (e.g. areas near disease outbreaks; areas with endemic species such as the Alps, the Pyrenees and islands in the Mediterranean);
6. Restrict the human induced spreading as well as the transport of amphibians where controls of *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* diseases are applied in areas monitored under point 5;
7. Develop, as soon as possible, emergency action plans that will allow prompt responses should *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* approach high risk populations of salamander and newt species (e.g. endemic species in the Alps, the Pyrenees and islands in the Mediterranean);
8. Support research into the biology, epidemiology, and mitigation of *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans*;
9. Support research on the conservation biology of European salamander and newt, particularly to improve knowledge on the demography and population dynamics;
10. Design and implement public awareness campaigns focused on prevention, biosafety and surveillance;
11. Keep the Standing Committee informed of the measures taken to implement this recommendation.