

WCC-2016-Res-022-EN

Conservation measures for vultures, including banning the use of veterinary diclofenac

NOTING that diclofenac, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) used for the veterinary care of cattle, was the cause of declines of over 99% of populations in three species of *Gyps* vultures in South Asia;

NOTING that, following the crash in South Asian vulture populations since the 1990s, a drastic decline in African vultures has also been revealed, with four species newly listed in 2015 as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, and that only two of 16 African-Eurasian species are listed by IUCN as Least Concern;

RECALLING Resolution 3.079 *Conservation of Gyps species of vultures in South and Southeast Asia* (Bangkok, 2004) and Recommendation 5.141 *Conservation of Gyps vulture species in South Asia* (Jeju, 2012), concerning, *inter alia*, veterinary diclofenac and safety testing for all veterinary painkillers as a requirement before licensing, manufacture or retail;

NOTING that other equally effective anti-inflammatory drugs, such as meloxicam, are available for veterinary use at a similar price without the severe impacts on *Gyps* vulture species;

APPLAUDING the efforts of the Governments of Bangladesh, India, Iran, Nepal and Pakistan in banning veterinary diclofenac and working to prevent its availability to farmers;

ALARMED that veterinary diclofenac was recently licensed in Italy and Spain, which support important vulture populations;

NOTING the 2014 Spanish Ornithological Congress resolution calling for the urgent prohibition of the use of veterinary diclofenac in Europe for treatment of livestock and its substitution with alternatives;

CONCERNED that successful recovery efforts for Europe's vultures may be jeopardised by the licensing of veterinary diclofenac in the EU;

FURTHER NOTING the growing evidence that other veterinary drugs, including other NSAIDs, may also be affecting the health of scavengers, especially vultures and other birds;

NOTING ALSO that the risks of veterinary pharmaceuticals to scavenging birds are not assessed before market authorisation is granted;

RECALLING the global *Guidelines to Prevent the Risk of Poisoning to Migratory Birds* adopted through Resolution 11.15 of the Eleventh Conference of Parties to the UNEP Convention on Migratory Species (CMS COP11, Quito, 2014);

RECOGNISING that the World Organisation for Animal Health Working Group on Wildlife in November 2014 expressed concerns for vulture populations in the EU and elsewhere because of their potential exposure to diclofenac while scavenging carcasses, and recommended the prohibition of all use of diclofenac and pro-diclofenac drugs in livestock;

FURTHER RECOGNISING that vultures contribute to ecosystem services on a large scale based on their unique specialisation as scavengers that rid the environment of rotting carcasses, and that vulture declines lead to a wide range of environmental and socio-economic (especially human health) and cultural consequences;

NOTING that in addition to the effects of diclofenac, vulture declines in the African Continent and Southeast Asia are caused by a complex range of factors which vary geographically, including: poisoning related to human-carnivore conflict and elephant poaching; trade in vulture body parts for traditional medicine; and mortality caused by birds colliding with energy infrastructure;

ALSO NOTING that the most significant threat to vulture populations in Africa is poisoning driven by human-wildlife conflict and elephant poaching, constituting over 60% of known

threats, rather than diclofenac and other NSAIDs, which are the predominant threat across Asia;

FURTHER NOTING that African vulture population declines related to trade in vulture body parts for traditional medicine, and poisoning related to elephant poaching, are both Africa-specific threats;

RECOGNISING that many higher-profile species, including big cats, other carnivores, elephants and rhinos, are also threatened by poisoning;

ACKNOWLEDGING the initiative to develop a Multi-Species Action Plan for migratory species of African-Eurasian vultures mandated in UNEP/CMS Resolution 11.14 *Programme of Work on Migratory Birds and Flyways* adopted by CMS COP11 (Quito, 2014);

ACKNOWLEDGING that measures to combat the declines in South Asia and some other range countries are showing signs of success, and that conservation efforts elsewhere have been locally successful; and

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING that organisations and consortia in all regions have recognised the severity of the issue and have made progress identifying and addressing conservation priorities to guide actions;

The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Hawai'i, United States of America, 1-10 September 2016:

1. REQUESTS the Director General and Commissions to:
 - a. support the implementation of UNEP/CMS Resolution 11.15 in relation to the recommendations to prevent risks to vultures from veterinary pharmaceuticals used to treat livestock; and
 - b. raise awareness of the ecological importance, plight of and solutions for African-Eurasian vultures at the highest political levels;
2. CALLS ON governments to implement urgently the recommendations of UNEP/CMS Resolution 11.15 to:
 - a. prohibit the use of veterinary diclofenac for the treatment of livestock and to substitute it with readily available safe alternatives, such as meloxicam;
 - b. prohibit the use of pro-diclofenac drugs such as aceclofenac for treatment of livestock and consider subsidizing veterinary meloxicam;
 - c. evaluate authorised veterinary pharmaceuticals products that suppose a risk for wildlife in order to be prohibited such as the use of pro-diclofenac drugs for treatment of livestock; and
 - d. introduce mandatory safety testing of NSAIDs for veterinary purposes that pose a risk to scavenging birds, including multi-species testing using *in-vitro* and read-across methods, with the burden of proof on the applicant;
3. CALLS ON the International Cooperation on Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Registration of Veterinary Products (VICH/OECD) to evaluate and provide guidance on wider risks of veterinary pharmaceuticals to scavenging birds in line with UNEP/CMS Resolution 11.15;
4. FURTHER CALLS ON governments to:
 - a. include "not for veterinary use" in labelling of diclofenac intended for human use;
 - b. implement a safety-testing protocol on *Gyps* vultures of all veterinary (Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory) drugs prior to them being marketed, and ensure that only vulture-safe drugs are licensed for veterinary use;
 - c. recognise in policy and planning the ecosystem service values of vultures, so as to

favour actions that conserve vulture populations;

d. support the development and implementation of the Multi-species Action Plan for African- Eurasian Vultures, mandated by UNEP/CMS Resolution 11.14;

e. further the development, and widen the application of Vulture Safe Zones, including the adaptation of new Vulture Safe Zones; and

f. promote the use of meloxicam in vulture-safe zones and beyond, ensure quality control in the local manufacturing of meloxicam, encourage labelling of meloxicam in relevant languages, and implement conservation measures for populations in range countries;

5. URGES IUCN Members and other organisations and agencies concerned with or affected by population declines in vultures, carnivores, elephants, rhinos and other species under similar pressures to form alliances to mitigate threats;

6. ENCOURAGES multi-sectoral and international collaboration on threats to vultures, particularly among the:

a. pharmaceutical sector regarding veterinary drugs;

b. agrochemical and livestock sectors regarding poison baits;

c. health sector regarding disease transmission;

d. traditional medicine sector regarding trade in vulture body parts; and

e. energy sector regarding energy generation and transmission; and

7. CALLS FOR the development of incentives and/or technical support to landowners, corporations, local and national governments and technical services, willing to manage their resources or environment in a way that conserves vultures in return for formal recognition.

State and agency Members of the United States abstained during the vote on this motion for reasons given in the U.S. General Statement on the IUCN Motions Process.