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EU scientists' findings back up Eurogroup's call to ban the import of wild birds for the pet trade

Eurogroup for Animals welcomes the newly published report by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) which concludes that the welfare of birds captured in the wild and imported into the EU is very poor. The opinion confirms animal welfare concerns about the suffering and the unacceptable high number of animals which die. It says that "several hazards lead to adverse consequences that are very serious for the welfare of the birds, indicated by high mortality".

The scientists also conclude that importing birds into the EU holds risks for the introduction and spread of animal diseases such as Avian Influenza, Avian Chlamydiosis and Newcastle Disease. The outbreaks of such diseases can have catastrophic consequences for animals and humans and lead to great economic losses. Eurogroup therefore feels that these risks need to be kept to a minimum.

Eurogroup's Director Sonja Van Tichelen says: "*We have been asking for many years for these imports to be stopped on welfare, conservation and health grounds. The EU is the biggest importer of birds in the world and most are for the pet trade. We are literally stealing wildlife from Third countries while we protect our own wild birds. This trade is not only unethical, it is not sustainable, and now we have the scientific evidence that this trade is also dangerous, and involves a great deal of animal suffering*".

It will now be up to the Commission and the Member States, when they meet in the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health in December, to translate this scientific report into EU legislation. Eurogroup considers that the only sensible decision would be that the ban, which is now in place because of Avian Flu, is made permanent.

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EFSA report: http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/science/ahaw/ahaw_opinions.html

Eurogroup webpage on birds: <http://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/policy/wildbirds.htm>

Eurogroup's report: <http://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/policy/pdf/birdsreport0606.pdf>

Wild bird declaration: <http://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/policy/pdf/wbdec.pdf>