

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

Ottawa (Canada), 12 to 24 July 1987

Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention

STATUS OF CAPTIVE BRED POPULATIONS OF THE
CHINCHILLA (Chinchilla spp.) OCCURRING
OUTSIDE OF SOUTH AMERICA

This document has been prepared by Canada.

Two recognized species of chinchilla (Chinchilla laniger and C. brevicaudata) are endemic to portions of Bolivia, Peru, Argentina and Chile. In 1975, the subspecies C.b. boliviana was placed in Appendix I. In 1977, both species mentioned above were placed in Appendix I as Chinchilla spp., with the notation +201, "Population of South America". However, no reference is made to the status of populations outside South America. Since the 1930s the chinchilla has been bred extensively in captivity in many parts of the world, apparently in complete genetic isolation from the original wild stock. A significant international trade in chinchilla fur pelts for the clothing industry has developed. Because the CITES status of the chinchilla populations outside South America is not clearly defined, they are sometimes regarded by exporting and importing countries as being in Appendix I, in Appendix II, or not in any appendix. Chinchilla breeders and dealers in North America have suffered loss because of the resulting confusion in permit requirements.

Canada believes that it was the intention of the Parties, when they placed the South American wild populations of chinchilla in Appendix I, to allow captive-bred chinchilla populations outside South America to remain outside the appendices. Indeed, this view was expressed by the Secretariat to the Austrian Management Authority (letter of 21 August 1984) as follows: "...chinchillas produced by farms in countries outside of South America are not considered as listed in CITES, and international trade in these animals is not covered by CITES documentation."

Two range states, Argentina and Chile, have recently informed Canada that the commercial trade in captive-bred specimens does not threaten their wild chinchilla populations (Bolivia and Peru were also queried but have not responded). Both range states and industry spokesmen claim that decades of selective breeding in isolation from wild specimens have resulted in considerable physical difference between captive-bred and wild specimens, particularly with regard to body size and the colour, density and length of the fur. They claim that there is no interest in introducing genetic material from the wild population. It appears that captive-bred chinchilla may now be regarded as being essentially domesticated, much like the hamster (Mesocricetus auratus) or ferret (Mustela putorius).

Canada is aware that the Parties have treated the listings of wild populations and their captive-bred or artificially-propagated counterparts in different ways, and the situation with the chinchilla may be without clear precedent. For example, as the Chilean Authority has pointed out to us, the recent decision by the Parties to retain the American cacti within the appendices, despite their extensive artificial propagation elsewhere, would appear to conflict with the action Canada is now recommending for the chinchilla. However, it appears that many Parties have regarded their captive-bred chinchilla as not included in the appendices and have allowed trade without permit requirements. According to range states, no threat to their wild populations has occurred. Therefore, the inclusion of populations outside South America in the appendices would not appear to be necessary to safeguard the wild population.

Recommendation: The Parties should add to the notation "+201 Population of South America" the statement "Populations outside South America are not included in the appendices". This would mean that specimens emanating from those latter populations would not require CITES permits. The wild populations in South America would be in Appendix I, as is now shown. Captive-bred specimens exported from South America would be considered as in Appendix II. Thus, only specimens from South America would require export, import and re-export permits when they move among countries within or outside of South America.

DRAFT RESOLUTION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

The Status of Captive-Bred Populations
of the Chinchilla (Chinchilla spp.) Occurring
Outside of South America

OBSERVING that at present the South American populations of chinchilla are listed in Appendix I, but no reference is made to populations outside South America;

RECALLING that the chinchilla has been bred extensively in captivity in many countries for many years and now supports a widespread international fur industry;

CONSIDERING that chinchilla exporters have experienced difficulties because of confusion among the Parties on the status of chinchilla bred outside South America;

NOTING that the domestic chinchilla has been bred in isolation from the wild gene pool for many decades and that there is now no interest among breeders in obtaining specimens from the wild;

RECOGNIZING that many countries outside South America have considered their captive-bred chinchilla to be outside the Convention appendices and that trade has proceeded without any negative impact on the wild populations;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

RECOMMENDS

- a) that Parties recognize that chinchilla bred in countries outside South America are not included in the appendices; and
- b) that the present notation following the listing of chinchilla in Appendix I be amended to read "+201 Population of South America. Populations outside South America are not included in the appendices".