

AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II OF THE CONVENTION

Other Proposals

A. PROPOSAL

Replacement of the current annotation +201 in Appendix I with °5xx, so that it will read "°5xx. Domesticated specimens are not subject to CITES provisions."

B. PROPONENT

Chile

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

11. Class: Mammalia
12. Order: Rodentia
13. Family: Chinchillidae
14. Species: *Chinchilla brevicaudata*
Chinchilla lanigera
15. Common Names: English: *C. brevicaudata* short-tailed chinchilla
C. lanigera long-tailed chinchilla
French:
Spanish: *C. brevicaudata* Chinchilla de cola corta
C. lanigera Chinchilla de cola larga
16. Code Numbers: *C. brevicaudata* A-110.023.001.001
C. lanigera A-110.023.001.002

2. Biological Data

Chinchillas are caviomorph rodents belonging to the Chinchillidae family. They have an average adult body weight of 400 gm, and they are similar in size to a small rabbit. They live in colonies and have nocturnal habits. Their preferred habitat is the rocky slopes of hills in desert areas. The Chinchillidae family is endemic to the Southern Cone of South America. Two species can be distinguished.

21. Distribution: The long-tailed chinchilla (*Chinchilla lanigera*) is believed to be endemic to Chile. In the wild, chinchillas live in groups in areas between 30° and 32.50° degrees latitude south (400 km north of Santiago), at altitudes ranging from sea level to 3,000 meters. The chinchilla is a rodent with a very fine coat, and somewhat smaller in size than a European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*). In Chile, the chinchilla is classified as in danger of extinction by the authorities entrusted with its protection. The short-tailed chinchilla (*Chinchilla brevicaudata*) lives in the high mountain areas at altitudes ranging from 3,000 to 6,000 meters above sea level, between 7.50° and 30° degrees latitude south. The distribution area ranges from the southern part of Peru to the western part of Bolivia, the northwestern part of Argentina and the northeastern part of Chile.

During the 1960s, scientific expeditions for the purpose of locating some colonies of long-tailed chinchilla (*Chinchilla lanigera*) were launched. In 1975, colonies of this species were located in the Auco sector, 18 km northwest of Illapel, IV Coquimbo Region, in Chile. The Corporación Nacional Forestal (CONAF) began studies on the species, and in 1993, the National Chinchilla Preserve was established. Within its 4,229 hectares, the populations of *Chinchilla lanigera* and their natural habitat are protected, researched and rehabilitated. The population of chinchillas of this species in the National Chinchilla Preserve is currently estimated at a maximum of 5,500 specimens. In recent years, new populations of this species have been located in nearby zones, so that it is now estimated that there are more chinchillas outside the Preserve than there are inside it.

Beginning in 1987, the Chilean Government, with the support of the World Fund for Nature (WWF), initiated a project to collect biological information and to develop a strategy for the recovery of the natural populations of *Chinchilla lanigera*. Thanks to the project, it became possible to describe the characteristics of the annual life cycle of the *Chinchilla lanigera* in its wild state and to establish the mating and birthing seasons, variations in weight, longevity, sex ratios and relative densities.

Chinchillas have been intensively bred in captivity since the 1930s, leading to the development of a major international fur industry. At present, the chinchillas bred in captivity can be regarded as domesticated.

22. Population: Currently the two wild species of chinchilla in South America are included in CITES Appendix I, but no reference is made to the contribution of the breeders of domesticated chinchillas. This makes the export of chinchilla pelts produced by the South American breeders difficult.
23. Biology: The domesticated chinchilla has been raised in isolation from the wild genetic pool for many decades. At the present time, because of the quality of the fur of their improved chinchillas, breeders have no interest in obtaining new specimens from the wild environment, and the trade in specimens raised in captivity poses no threat to the wild chinchilla populations. The domesticated specimens have phenotypic fur characteristics that are far superior to those of animals born in the natural environment. They are larger in size, have distinctive colouring, and a different and excellent pelt quality, unlike the wild animals, whose fur is thin. The breeders have developed a very large type of chinchilla weighing 700 gm. Today there are colour mutations such as black, beige, white, violet, etc.

3. Trade Data

31. National Utilization: Because of the intensive hunting to which they were subjected during the last century and the beginning of this one, both species of chinchilla, the *Chinchilla lanigera* and *Chinchilla brevicaudata*, have been made subject to an indefinite prohibition on hunting, and there is no domesticated or international trade in wild specimens or the products thereof in the countries in which they are found in the wild: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru.

The wild chinchilla has no commercial value, and its fur differs greatly from that of the captive variety. For this reason, no one would undertake the commercial export of wild chinchilla pelts. The fur of the wild specimens usually resembles that of the agouti (yellowish cast), which is regarded as most undesirable by the international fur industry.

Both species of chinchilla are protected by an indefinite prohibition based on an international agreement making their capture, marketing and export illegal. This agreement was signed in 1910 by all of the range States: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru. It should be stressed

that this agreement was the very first ever signed by the Latin American countries for the protection of a species of wildlife.

32. Legal International Trade: When the Spaniards reached this continent, this rodent was hunted by the natives, who used the pelts and the meat. The excellent quality of the fur led to indiscriminate hunting, to the point of placing both species in danger of extinction. By way of example, it might be mentioned that in 1899, Chile exported 435,000 wild chinchilla pelts. This implies that much more extensive hunting took place, since only those skins of real commercial value could be exported.

The Agriculture and Livestock Service (SAG), which is the CITES Administrative Authority for terrestrial fauna in Chile, has maintained registers of the authorized breeders of chinchillas of the "American domesticated breed" from 1957 to the present. The total current number of selected domesticated specimens in the 60 breeding establishments authorized by the SAG is approximately 10,000.

The commercial breeding of this fur-bearing animal in the United States began in 1923, when the California engineer Mathias Chapman imported 12 specimens of the Chilean chinchilla from Potrerillos, Chile, for the purpose of undertaking scientific research on the Andean rodent. Later genetic improvement produced a hybrid that was more fertile and prolific, larger in size, and characterized by greater density of fur and better clarity of colour and texture. A level higher than that of the original species was achieved.

NUMBER OF PELTS AND LIVE CHINCHILLAS EXPORTED
FROM CHILE BY FIVE-YEAR PERIODS

YEARS	NUMBER OF WILD SKINS EXPORTED	LIVE SPECIMENS EXPORTED
1910-1914	308,772	0
1915-1919	4,908	0
1920-1924	1,162	0
1925-1929	512	0
1930-1934	3,140	0
1935-1939	0	24
1940-1944	0	42
1945-1949	0	360
1950-1954	0	219
1955-1959	0	318
1960-1964	0	200
1965-1985	0	0
TOTAL	318,494	1,163

The most intensive trade in chinchilla pelts occurred in the period between 1910 and 1914, representing the stocks of pelts of the chinchillas captured up to 1910, in which year the governments of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Peru signed an agreement prohibiting the

hunting and marketing of the pelts of this animal because of the limited numbers existing in the wild.

NUMBER OF BREEDER-PRODUCED CHINCHILLA
PELTS EXPORTED FROM CHILE

YEARS	NUMBER OF SKINS EXPORTED (raw)	CITES PERMITS ISSUED
1987	115	3
1988	430	11
1989	559	10
1990	1,117	21
1991	504	10
1992	862	12
1993	1,982	21
TOTAL	5.569	88

As the table above shows, the total number of chinchilla pelts bred in captivity (hybrid) exported from Chile in the period between 1987 and 1993 was 5,569.

33. Illegal Trade: Because of the limited number of sites with wild populations, and the almost non-existent commercial value of the wild skins, no illegal trade in either species has been detected anywhere in the range States.

4. Protection Status

41. National: The regulation governing the Chilean Law on Hunting No. 4.601 provides in its Article 2 that all of the species of Chilean vertebrates are protected for 20 years by a conservation prohibition.

With a view to maintaining continuing control of the wild specimens, it would be desirable to maintain the wild chinchillas in the South American countries in Appendix I.

5. References

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