

Non-detriment finding for European otter (*Lutra lutra*)

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Scientific Opinion of the Panel on CITES of the Norwegian
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VKM assessment:

Non-detriment finding for European otter (*Lutra lutra*)

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Competing interests: VKM Panel on CITES declares no competing interests in relation to this NDF.

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Scientific name: *Lutra lutra*

Common name(s): European otter, Eurasian otter

Norwegian name: Oter

Type of permit: CITES Appendix I (Norwegian CITES Regulation Annex I, List A).
Country of Export: Norway (NO).
Country of Import: Finland (FI).

Purpose and source: The proposal concerns the export of one live female otter born August 2022, from Kristiansand Dyrepark AS, Norway to Helsinki Zoo in Finland, with purpose-of-transaction code Z. The animal was born in captivity, but one or both parents were born in the wild, source code F.

Lutra lutra is listed in CITES Appendix I (Norwegian Cites Regulation Annex 1, list A), and thus a scientific assessment is required to ensure that exports are not detrimental to the survival of wild populations, in compliance with CITES Article III.

VKM has adopted the definition of detriment, cf. Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17) suggested by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Scientific Authority (<https://www.fws.gov/international/pdf/archive/workshop-american-ginseng-cites-non-detriment-findings.pdf>):

1. Harvest that is not sustainable.
2. Harvest that harms the status of the species in the wild.
3. Removal from the wild that results in habitat loss or destruction, or that interferes with recovery efforts for a species.

Conclusion:

VKM concludes that the export of one live Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) born in captivity with the purpose of being transferred to another zoological garden, is not detrimental to the survival of the species.

The conclusion is based on the following factors:

- The individual is born in captivity and the export will not have any harmful effect on the conservation status of the species.
- The transaction is not for commercial purposes.
- The Norwegian population of *Lutra lutra* is assessed as Least Concern on the Norwegian Red List for Species.

1. Biological Information

Distribution: The Eurasian otter has a very wide range covering parts of Europe, Asia and Africa (Roos et al, 2015). In Europe otters have been found in brackish waters below sea level in the Netherlands, and up to 2,400 m in the Pyrenees (Conroy et al, 2015).

Life history: The Eurasian otter attains sexual maturity at around 18 months in males and 24 months in the case of females and are non-seasonally polyoestrous, mating in captivity has been observed at all times of the year. The litter size varies from 1 to 5, and the life expectancy is around 17 years (Roos et al., 2015).

Role in the ecosystem: The Eurasian otter lives in a wide variety of aquatic habitats including saltwater and freshwater habitats. The species, however, depends on dry nests on land to breed and rest. Foraging takes place in water and fish is the main prey. The diet may also include aquatic insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds, small mammals, and crustaceans (Heggeberget and Moseid, 1994).

2. Population status and trend

Global: Decreasing. The number of individuals is unknown. The status of its population is not known from many parts of its range, particularly from North Africa and Asia. Recovery has been observed in western Europe and Central Asia (Roos et al., 2015).

Local (Europe): Unknown. For European subpopulations, many of the estimates have not been updated for the last 20 years (Roos et al., 2015).

In 2021 the Green Status of the Eurasian otter population was assessed to have a recovery score of 40%, or Largely Depleted (Loy et al., 2021).

3. Conservation status

Global IUCN status: Near Threatened (Roos et al., 2015).

Local IUCN status (Europe): Near Threatened (Conroy et al., 2007), needs updating. The Norwegian population is assessed to be of Least Concern (Eldegard et al., 2021).

4. Threats

The Eurasian otter is threatened by habitat loss in parts of its range, and as an aquatic species, it is vulnerable to dams and water management. Pollution of water (both acidification and fertilization) reduces the viability of fish and thereby the food resources of otters. Fishing gear aimed at other species may be harmful to otters and they can be killed in conflicts with fishermen. The Asian population is believed to be under great pressure because of poaching (Roos et al., 2015).

5. Conservation and management measures

International legislation

The Eurasian otter has been listed on CITES Appendix I since 1977, and under the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations Annex A since 1997.

6. Trade/ use

Otters have been hunted for their pelts and for use as food (locally). In recent years a rise in illegal trade has been caused by a growing market for pet otters in Japan also involving *L. lutra* (Kitade and Naruse, 2018).

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