



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF ZOO VETERINARIANS

"Dedicated to wildlife health and conservation"

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22 September 2017

TO: Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners
FROM: American Association of Zoo Veterinarians
RE: Support for banning or altering unlimited commercial collection of Nevada Reptiles

The American Association of Zoo Veterinarians (AAZV) is a professional organization of veterinarians dedicated to the health and well-being of captive and free-ranging wildlife. We represent over 1000 animal health professionals from multiple disciplines that center around the health of wildlife, exotic animals, animals in zoos, and animals in aquaria. In our many professional capacities, AAZV members provide care for the health and welfare of animals and ecosystems in captive and wild environments, including captive and free-ranging reptiles. It is with this expertise that we respectfully offer comments regarding the proposed changes to Nevada's practice of allowing unlimited collection of native reptiles.

Nevada's reptiles are a beautiful and diverse group that is a treasure with some species are found only in this state. Reptiles are critical to the health of the ecosystems they live in, with specific functions unique to each species. The niche of reptiles is so important for the state of Nevada that declines in the populations of Nevada's native reptiles are assured to begin an erosion of the entire states ecosystems.

Reptiles are experiencing wide ranging pressures on their populations, including habitat loss from urbanization, renewable energy farms and agriculture. Additionally, Nevada's reptiles experience severe pressure from unlimited commercial collection. These reptiles are collected without regard for species, sex, or time of year, with consequences on sustainable reproduction. Data compiled by Nevada Department of Wildlife appears to show a steady decline in the reptile population with this practice of unlimited collection. Nevada is the only western state to continue to allow the ecologically damaging practice of unlimited commercial collection of reptiles from the wild.

As the NDOW assesses future commercial collection of reptiles, the AAZV strongly encourages science-based collection limits that take into account population estimates, species natural history, and environmental impacts of collection. Collection limits should be established with specific and concisely defined criteria, such as season or species. Where quality data is not available, the NDOW should either prohibit collection or set conservative limits while information is gathered. Unlimited commercial collection of reptiles from the wild should no longer be practiced in Nevada, or any other state.

Respectfully,

R. Scott Larsen, DVM, MS, Dipl ACZM
AAZV President