

BVA policy position on rewilding and other releases of previously native species or subspecies

Legislation and guidelines

BVA considers that the planned re-introduction of previously native species to the UK must follow national and international legislation, standards and guidelines, including the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Guidelines. These not only aim to ensure the health and welfare of the released animals, but that of other species, including man. Conservation translocations within the UK should follow similar principles (see The Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations Best Practice Guidelines for Conservation Translocations in Scotland).

Considerations

Full consultation with all stakeholders must be included at the planning stage, before any re-introductions take place. A thorough risk assessment with veterinary involvement including; pre-introduction screening for disease, consideration of possible changes in disease epidemiology as a result of the release, the health and welfare risks that may be posed to both the re-introduced species and other species, including man. Full consideration must also be given to the potential ecological and environmental impacts of re-introductions on other species. Post-release there must be effective monitoring and recording of data, alongside an exit strategy to deal with unforeseen consequences.

Escape of non-native species

Where there is an escape of non-native species, without following the principles detailed above, this may pose a welfare and disease threat to other species. In the instance of an escape a species-specific approach is required which will depend upon the risks identified. This may include re-capture and subsequent planned re-introduction of the animals (e.g. beavers), the control of further releases (e.g. grey squirrels and Canada geese), and the careful management or a controlled cull of those animals remaining in the wild.

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