

# Policy Brief

## Commercial wildlife farming in Viet Nam: Requirements and practicalities of applying zoonotic prevention and control measures

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### Introduction

The farming of wild animals is widespread in Viet Nam. Although a relatively comprehensive legal system regulates the commercial farming of wild animals, regulations tend to be rather generic without detailed guidance for implementation. Furthermore, enforcement, clarity on responsibility and accountability, as well as collaboration between agencies, could be improved. To determine the legal requirements, actual implementation and factors influencing the adoption of measures to prevent zoonotic emergence and spillover, a policy review and in-depth interviews were conducted in 2022. The findings were discussed and validated in April 2023 during a consultation workshop on the invitation of the One Health Partnership Secretariat with 64 participants. The resulting recommendations include practical solutions to address identified shortcomings and gaps. This paper summarises the methodology, key findings, and recommendations from the two studies and the consultation workshop.

### Methodology

The study is based on a literature review and analysis of the legal systems regulating wildlife farms and the prevention and control of infectious diseases on animals. Empirical data was collected in eight provinces, including Vinh Phuc, Nghe An, Lam Dong, Tay Ninh, Binh Phuoc, Long An, Soc Trang, and Hau Giang, through semi-structured interviews with:

- 16 officials from the Forest Protection Department (FPD) and the Department of Animal Health and Livestock Production (DAHLP)
- 41 breeders (wildlife farm owners and workers)

## Regulations on preventing animal diseases and the actualisation of implementation

The desk study identified a couple of regulations applicable either specifically to facilities breeding wild animals or for livestock in general, which could include commercially run facilities breeding wild animals. The application of these regulations in practice was then discussed with officials in the provinces as well as persons working at these facilities. The key findings are summarised below.

### Issues related to the veterinary and animal health requirements for the farming of wild animals

- Detailed guidance and standards for the farming of wild animals are missing. General veterinarian requirements for domesticated animals are available.
- Responsibilities for following up on prevention and control of zoonoses at facilities breeding wild animals are not clearly detailed; e.g., provincial DAHLPs are assigned responsibility for livestock only, without mentioning farms of wild animals.
- There are no penalties defined for non-compliance related to the implementation of zoonotic prevention and control measures at wildlife farms.



### Issues related to the registration, inspection and reporting of wildlife farms

- The lack of animal marking systems poses the risk of laundering and illegal trade through commercial breeding facilities.
- The lack of specific regulations on the frequency of reporting by breeders poses the risk of no or irregular reporting without the possibility of strict follow-up.
- The templates for the breeding plan and the monitoring book for wildlife farms are either too vague or too difficult to complete with adequate and relevant information by farm owners.
- Decree No. 84/2021 does not stipulate a timeline for wildlife farm owners to register their operations (i.e., submission of an application dossier).
- There are many lists (10) defining wild animals in different legal documents.

### Issues related to the practical implementation of existing regulations for wildlife farms and veterinary / animal health requirements.

- FPDs are not assigned to share information about registered wildlife farms with DAHLPs, i.e., the information on these farms is not comprehensively available to DAHLPs.
- DAHLPs do not or only irregularly check health and biosecurity requirements at facilities breeding wild animals.
- Many small-scale breeders have limited capacity to prepare the breeding plan and fully and adequately record in the monitoring book.
- Veterinarians have limited experience and knowledge in treating infectious diseases, including zoonoses on wild animals or detecting potential zoonotic pathogens.
- The joint-Circular No. 16/2013/TTLT-BYT-BNN&PTNT does not specify any responsibilities of FPD in the prevention and control of zoonoses. In practice, FPD does not join the zoonotic outbreak investigation team.

## Factors influencing the adoption of measures by owners of facilities farming wild animals

Mandatory and recommended zoonotic prevention and control measures can be grouped into four categories:

i) Sterilising cages and isolating animals

iii) Using personal protective equipment

ii) Vaccinating animals

iv) Keeping breeding facilities far from human dwellings

Generally, the farm owners agreed with the measures of the first two categories. The vaccination of wild animals was discussed controversially, given the lack of vaccines for wild animals. While breeders generally agreed with the measure of keeping facilities for wild animal farming far from home, they lacked the ability to implement this due to limited land ownership.

The most important factors that influence the application of preventive measures include:



Risk attitude



Regulations and guidance



Access to information



Perceived control

Generally speaking, the interviewed farm owners perceived a low risk of zoonotic emergence and spillover in wildlife farms. This is partially due to the limited access to information about zoonotic diseases and treatment. While most farmers mentioned that they would follow official regulations and guidance on the prevention and control of zoonotic emergence and spillover, the lack thereof strongly demotivates them from implementing many preventative measures. The application of a specific measure is affected by the breeders' beliefs in their ability and available resources (e.g., knowledge, land, time, budget).

*"I have not heard that breeding civets can transmit any diseases to humans," - a civet breeder in Lam Dong.*

*"If I know any effective measures being taken by other breeders, I am willing to learn and follow," - a porcupine breeder in Tay Ninh.*





## Recommendations

The consultation workshop was followed by group work to discuss options to address findings related to regulation and their application, as well as factors influencing the adoption of measures. The experts discussed i) the provisions needed for the prevention and control of zoonotic emergence and spillover in the wildlife trade and wildlife farming and ii) how awareness can be enhanced and behavioural change achieved for wildlife farm owners and related stakeholders in regards to zoonotic transmission risks and measures to prevent and control zoonotic emergence and spillover. Key recommendations include:

- Develop specific requirements (e.g., technical requirements, biosecurity/biosafety standards and measures, disease monitoring, and traceability) for the commercial breeding of wild animals.
- Develop legal sanctions for non-compliance (i.e., penalties applied when not meeting those requirements).
- Develop criteria for defining high-zoonotic-risk (HZR) wild animal taxa and practices (i.e., history of spillover, evidence of zoonotic pathogens) for farming and consumption.
- Develop a protocol for assessing zoonotic transmission risks and develop a list of HZR wild animals and practices.
- Apply criteria and protocol for high-risk taxa and high-risk practices in case a list of animals allowed for commercial breeding is developed by the FPD.
- Specify a timeline for registering facilities for the breeding of wild animals.
- Specify the role of FPDs in zoonotic disease surveillance in wildlife farms, specifically concerning sharing information about registered wildlife farms with related agencies such as DAH.
- Design and implement evidence-based interventions to raise awareness about zoonotic transmission risks in wildlife farms and change the behaviour of related stakeholders.

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For reference, please visit:

[www.alliance-health-wildlife.org](http://www.alliance-health-wildlife.org)  
[www.onehealth.org.vn](http://www.onehealth.org.vn)

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