

IUCN SSC Wildlife Health Specialist Group

2016-2017 Report



Richard Kock



William B. Karesh

Co-Chairs

Richard Kock ⁽¹⁾
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Location/Affiliation

⁽¹⁾ Royal Veterinary College, London, UK
⁽²⁾ EcoHealth Alliance, New York, US

Number of members

262

Social networks

Facebook:
IUCN SSC Wildlife Health Specialist Group
Twitter:
@IUCNWildHealth
Website:
www.iucn-whsg.org



Mission statement

The group is commissioned to serve as a first response for wildlife health concerns relevant to conservation around the world. The focus of the group is on health impacts that relate to the conservation of species, some of which are negative to wildlife population persistence and a threat to endangered species.

Main activities by Key Priority Area (2016 & 2017)

Conservation action

■ Research activities

i. Through our Co-Chair's research, we have helped disseminate the findings of investigations of Saiga antelope mass die-offs in Mongolia and Kazakhstan. (KSR #23)

■ Technical advice

i. We provided recommendations to government or inter-governmental agencies (e.g., EU) on disease control (including on rabies vaccination of rare canids, threats to Gyps vulture populations from veterinary licensing of diclofenac, and wildlife poisoning from lead shot). (KSR #27)

Increasing diversity of SSC

■ Membership

i. We have expanded the regional and disciplinary expertise (e.g., toxicology) of our members. It should be noted that we subsequently reviewed our membership in its entirety for the new quadrennium and updated our total list to ensure an active and responsive membership, so we have not reported number breakdowns here.

Policy

■ Conservation activities

i. We co-sponsored and provided input into policy motions for the WCC (on wildlife poisoning, bat culling, and lead gunshot in wetlands).

■ Policy advice

i. To support timely international movement of diagnostic specimens for conservation purposes, we developed evidence products for CITES Parties (white paper and peer-reviewed paper published), developed presentations for two policy outreach events (CITES, OIE meetings), and conducted one liaising collaboration (with OIE). (KSR #26)

ii. We provided inputs to UNEP GEO Environment and Health, CBD Biodiversity and Health, WHO, OIE, One Health programmes NEOH, ALTERNET and IBPES (Europe). (KSR #27)

Acknowledgements

We thank the following donors that provided core funding for the group's activities (e.g., website administration, article publication, expert participation in UN policy fora): USAID Emerging Pandemic Threats PREDICT-2 project and EcoHealth Alliance, UNEP CMS, UNEP GEO, ALTERNET, IBPES, EU COST, NERC UK, Saiga Conservation Alliance and Royal Veterinary College (CITES attendance on diagnostic specimens).

Targets for the quadrennium 2017-2020

Communications

Communication: 10 technical recommendations delivered.

Synergy: 10 external outreach events/materials/forums (e.g., policy conventions, social media) delivered showcasing relevance of wildlife health to One Health.

Conservation action

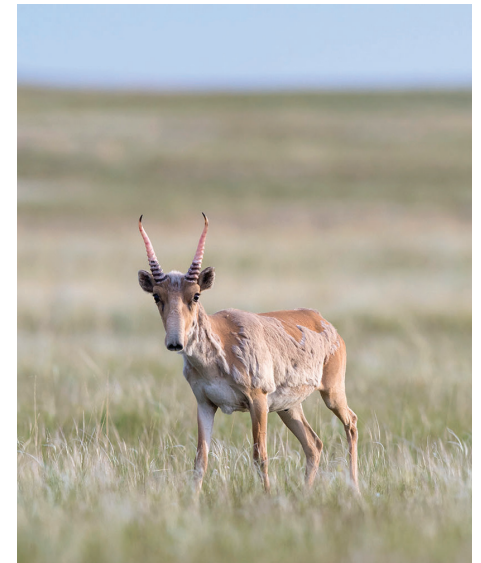
Communication: 10 SSC documents reviewed.

Red List: 10 technical assessments delivered to SSC taxonomic groups.

Research activities: five wildlife mass morbidity/mortality events investigated.



Mass mortality event at Kazakhstan in 2015, more than 220,000 saiga (60% of the global population) died over three weeks
Photo: Alexa Wolfs Royal Veterinary College



Young male of saiga antelope, Kazakhstan, 2017
Photo: Daniel Rosengren FZS

Prof. Richard Kock, Co-chair IUCN SSC Wildlife Health Specialist Group, and Dr Azimkhan, Astana Veterinary Reference Laboratory, carrying out necropsy of a wild saiga antelope in the steppe, Irghiz, Republic of Kazakhstan
Photo: Daniel Rosengren FZS

Increasing diversity of SSC

Membership: membership in 100 countries.

Policy

Policy advice: policy for simplified process for international movement of emergency diagnostic specimens of conservation species adopted.

Projected impact for the quadrennium 2017-2020

By the end of 2020, we envision wildlife health will be recognized as a critically important dimension of species survival, enabling the SSC to more proactively and effectively manage wildlife disease threats and threats to wildlife health from human activities, spill over of domestic animals and human diseases or inappropriate reactions to wildlife disease events. We will focus our efforts on policies that support prevention and management of disease, including disease-specific recommendations (e.g., to governments) as well as simplified processes to facilitate timely international movement of emergency diagnostic specimens for conservation

purposes under CITES and in terms of growing restrictions to timely diagnosis under Nagoya Protocols and similar initiatives. We apply the IUCN-OIE Guidelines for Wildlife Disease Risk Analysis as well as embed wildlife health considerations in future IUCN, UN (CMS, GEO, CBD, etc.) knowledge products to help proactively reduce disease risks and impacts of human activities on wildlife health. Through our regionally-diverse expert membership, we will aggregate information on wildlife disease events and adverse impacts on wildlife health as well as provide technical support on investigations of key wildlife morbidity and mortality events for enhanced understanding of disease pathways and drivers to inform conservation action. Through our ongoing work with international and regional partners (e.g., UN Convention on Biological Diversity, World Health Organization, Wildlife Disease Association, World Organisation for Animal Health, UNEP GEO, UNEP CMS), we will continue to highlight and raise awareness of the links between the health of humans, animals and the environment and showcase how 'One Health' approaches can help mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Summary of activities (2016-2017)

Key Priority Area ratio: 3/7

Key Priority Areas addressed:

- Conservation action (2 activities)
- Increasing diversity of SSC (1 activity)
- Policy (3 activities)

Main KSRs addressed: 23, 26, 27

KSR: Key Species Result