



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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THE UNITED STATES PROHIBITS IMPORTATION OF "RACCOON DOG"

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has listed the raccoon dog as an injurious animal under the Lacey Act in order to limit its importation into the United States. The injurious animal list includes species such as the mongoose, the fruit bat, Indian wild dog and others which the Secretary of the Interior has determined are harmful to the environment.

Raccoon dogs, though actually Asiatic canids, resemble the American raccoon and have many raccoon-like habits including a wide selection of foods ranging from bird eggs and small mammals to carrion and garbage. Their scientific name is Nyctereutes procyonoides.

Between 1929 and 1955, Russian wildlife agents captured nearly 9,000 raccoon dogs from their natural Eastern Siberian range and released them as furbearers in central and western parts of the Soviet Union. From these stocks, the animals have become widely established in Europe from Scandinavia to Greece.

Their dense, yellowish, black-tipped pelage is used by furriers for coat trim and parka linings. Two American fur farms already raise raccoon dogs, selling their pelts to the fur trade for an average of about \$80 each. Although none of the captive animals is known to have escaped at this time, it is feared that if more fur farms were allowed to raise the animals, accidental releases would eventually occur as has already happened with nutria, gerbils, monk parakeets, walking catfish, and other exotic animals. The danger, according to Robert Jantzen, director of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is that the diminutive but adaptable dogs would move into ecological niches already occupied by native American furbearers. "Their ability to live in many different climates and forage on a wide variety of foods put them at an advantage over native furbearers. Bobcats, lynxes, foxes, badgers, opossums, skunks, and raccoons might suffer if raccoon dogs take hold." The alien animals could also do serious damage to ground nesters such as ducks, geese, and upland game birds.

Like its namesake, the raccoon dog weighs from 10 to 17 pounds, has dense, grizzled fur, black cheek spots, small feet, and a full tail. It is also nocturnal. Unlike the raccoon who usually makes its den in a hollow tree, however, the raccoon dog digs its own burrow. And like a bear it fattens up in the fall and sleeps through the coldest months. It is, in fact, the only known winter sleeper of the world's canids.

(more)

The Canadian Wildlife Service placed the raccoon dog on its Import Control List in October 1981.

Listing raccoon dogs as injurious animals prohibits both the importation and interstate shipment of live specimens except under permit for scientific, medical, educational, or zoological purposes.

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