



NOTICE TO THE WILDLIFE IMPORT/EXPORT COMMUNITY



March 8, 2021

Subject: Invasive Zebra Mussels Found in Aquarium Moss Balls

Background:

Invasive zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) have been found in “moss balls” (an aquarium product containing green filamentous algae), imported into the United States and commonly sold at multiple pet supply stores and chains across North America.

Zebra mussels are listed as an injurious species under 50 CFR Part 16.13 and are prohibited from being imported into the United States without an Injurious Species Permit issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). If zebra mussels become established in watersheds, they can cause significant damage to aquatic habitats including; disrupting the food chain, changing water chemistry, clogging water intake and delivery systems for boats, drinking water, irrigation and hydro power.

Zebra mussels are small mollusks with a “D” shaped triangular shell that can grow to approximately 5 cm in length. They are white to cream-colored, with jagged black to brown stripes. Larval zebra mussels are microscopic and may be present in the water moss balls are transported in. Juvenile and adult zebra mussels may attach to the filaments of the moss balls and live on or in these products with little to no evidence of contamination. Zebra mussels can also survive outside of water for weeks.

Action:

While imports of moss balls are not currently prohibited, be aware that any future imports of moss balls may be subject to enforcement actions, including but not limited to seizure, if they are found to be contaminated with zebra mussels.

If you have recently imported moss balls, notify the Service immediately by sending an email to r9le_www@fws.gov with the date of import, port of entry, country of export, quantity imported. If you have any remaining stock of these infested items, you must follow the prescribed instructions regarding destruction and disposal of moss balls found here: <https://www.fws.gov/fisheries/ANS/zebra-mussel-disposal.html>. You should also contact any customers who may have purchased these items from you and inform them of the need to destroy and properly dispose of these moss balls.

In addition, anyone who discovers zebra mussels in their moss balls should contact their local state wildlife authorities to ensure compliance with any local injurious wildlife regulations.

Under no circumstances should these moss balls or the water they have been in contact with be disposed of in local waterways or storm drains. Doing so will result in violations of the Lacey Act injurious wildlife provisions and could result in investigation and enforcement action being taken.

Contact:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Office of Law Enforcement
703-358-1949; 703-358-2271 (fax)
lawenforcement@fws.gov (e-mail)