



NOTICE TO THE WILDLIFE IMPORT/EXPORT COMMUNITY



January 20, 2023

Subject: Declaration of Wildlife

Background:

On February 23, 2023, zebra plecos (*Hypancistrus zebra*) will be listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Although the trade may utilize the L-number system when describing specimens in the pleco family (Loricariidae), L-numbers are not a formal scientific designation. Service regulations require that the specimen be identified by scientific name and declared to the species level.

50CFR 14.61 and 14.63:

Import/Export declaration requirements.

Importers/exporters or their agents must furnish all applicable information requested on the 3-177 and the importer/exporter or their agent must certify that the information furnished is true and complete to the best of his/her knowledge and belief.

If the correct identity of the wildlife cannot be established, it is grounds for refusal:

50 CFR 14.53(b)(2):

Refusal of clearance. Any Service officer may refuse clearance of imported or exported wildlife and any Customs officer acting under [§ 14.54](#) may refuse clearance of imported wildlife when there are responsible grounds to believe that:

- (1) A Federal law or regulation has been violated;
- (2) The correct identity and country of origin of the wildlife has not been established (in such cases, the burden is upon the owner, importer, exporter, consignor, or consignee to establish such identity by scientific name to the species level or, if any subspecies is protected by the laws of this country or the country of origin to the subspecies level).

Exceptions to this requirement relate to scientific specimens imported by scientific institutions for taxonomic, systematic research, or faunal survey purposes (50 CFR 14.62 (c)).

For instructions on the declaration of CITES corals, please refer to Notices to the Wildlife Import/Export Community dated April 26, 2011 found [here](#) and March 15, 2013 found [here](#).

Action:

Importers and exporters must furnish all information requested on the Declaration for Importation and or Exportation form 3-177, including the complete scientific name of the wildlife. L-numbers will not be accepted in lieu of scientific names.

Contact:

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