



ACTION REQUEST

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RACCOON DOGS - THE ENVIRONMENTAL THREAT MUST BE ENDED

In September, 1980, an exotic wildlife species, the European raccoon dog (Nyctereutes procyonoides) was imported into Ontario from Finland to establish a fur farm breeding operation (see Nature Canada, April/June 1981).

The raccoon dog is quite prolific - the original 140 animals increased to over 500 in 1981. The European experience shows that its high reproductive capability and adaptability poses an environmental hazard. It has spread from Russia into Scandanavian countries, France and Poland. A Guelph University report documents severe impacts on indigenous wildlife, particularly waterfowl and ground nesting birds. The animal is a depraerator of crops and domestic fowl and is a carrier of parasites and rabies.

The possibility that raccoon dogs could become established in the Canadian wild and supplant native wildlife led the Canadian Nature Federation and other conservation groups to press government for an end to the fur farming operation in Ontario and the removal of the animals from Canada.

The federal government responded in several ways. An Order-in-Council added raccoon dogs to the Import Control List of the Export and Import Permits Act. This action bans any further import of raccoon dogs into Canada. Further, the Foreign Investment Review Agency found that the Finnish investment was not in the best interests of Canada because of potential ecological problems, but a change to Canadian ownership has allowed the fur farm to continue. Federal negotiations with the operation's owner, to ship the breeding stock back to Finland, were not successful.

To my knowledge, the government of Ontario did little to prevent the import of raccoon dogs and has not sought to end the fur farm operation at Madoc. Most provincial and territorial governments have prohibited the import of raccoon dogs into their jurisdictions from Ontario. However, the prospect remains that further operations may be established in Ontario and that animals could spread throughout Canada by escape.

The events surrounding the raccoon dog problem raise a larger, very important issue - the need for federal legislation which would ban the import or export of wildlife into or out of Canada or into or out of any province or territory, except under permit. The passage of such legislation requires consensus of the provinces and the territories.

The impetus for legislation (a Wildlife Export and Import Act) was first given by the Federal-Provincial Wildlife Conference in 1968. Governments were urged to prohibit the import of non-indigenous species of wildlife into any province or territory of Canada, except under certain circumstances. We understand that, as a result of the raccoon dog controversy, legislation was proposed to the provinces by the federal government.

We need your help to stop the import into Canada of potentially damaging exotic wildlife.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP? - SEE NEXT PAGE.