From: EcoHealth Alliance WHSG [mailto:whsq@ecohealthalliance.org]

Sent: 14 September 2014 02:20 AM **To:** whsg@ecohealthalliance.org

Subject: IUCN SSC WHSG: Diclofenac Licensing Concerns

Dear Colleagues,

The licensing of the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug diclofenac for veterinary use in several EU states poses serious concerns for vulture health and their important ecosystem services. Diclofenac has been clearly demonstrated to cause catastrophic levels of mortality of vultures that consume any livestock that have been treated with the drug. The regulatory approval in the EU for diclofenac use is extremely concerning given the precipitous declines in vulture populations which have resulted from diclofenac use on the Indian subcontinent, including loss of more than 40 million vultures over only fifteen years.

Vulture population loss has caused major direct and indirect environmental impacts, including increases in feral dog numbers that exploit the vulture food sources (and thereby giving rise to higher incidence of rabies and dog bites) and much increased costs of carcass disposal. Most alarming is the threat of total extinction of several vulture species due to diclofenac's high toxicity in some species, and the associated loss of biodiversity. Although veterinary regulations are relatively strict in Europe, every instance of failing to meet immediate carcass disposal requirements could result in numerous vulture mortalities. This could be especially pronounced in Spain, which holds 90% of Europe's vulture population.

We encourage IUCN SSC WHSG and other members of the wildlife health community to make their own national veterinary authorities aware of this problem, which might also emerge in their jurisdiction. Across South Asia, the governments and conservation community have successfully taken steps to ban veterinary diclofenac since 2006, and instead encourage the use of other out of patent drugs that are widely available alternatives (such as meloxicam) that are known to be safe for vultures and other scavengers. The IUCN SSC WHSG has been working with other members of the IUCN SSC, including the Vulture Specialist Group, and EWDA to reverse the EU's approval on diclofenac use.

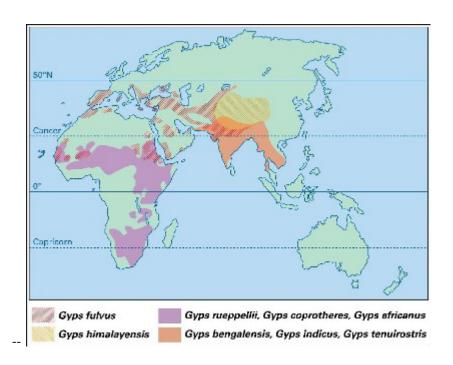
For more information, please see:

Attached map of *Gyps* species distribution: From SAVE (http://www.save-vultures.org/save-speciesguide.html)

Green, R. E., Newton, I., Shultz, S., Cunningham, A. A., Gilbert, M., Pain, D. J. & Prakash, V. (2004). Diclofenac poisoning as a cause of vulture population declines across the Indian subcontinent. J Appl Ecology 41(5): 793-800.

Prakash V, Bishwakarma MC, Chaudhary A, Cuthbert R, Dave R, et al. (2012) The Population Decline of *Gyps* Vultures in India and Nepal Has Slowed since Veterinary Use of Diclofenac was Banned. PLoS ONE 7(11): e49118.

http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0049118



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