



Warning of a Serious Threat to European Vultures.

The International Association for Falconry and the Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) notes with dismay and outrage that Diclofenac (a Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drug used for the treatment of pain and inflammation) is available for veterinary use in Member States of the European Union including Italy and Spain.

This drug is incredibly toxic to vultures, even in very small quantities, and fatal poisoning can result when vultures consume the carcasses of animals treated, before their death, with Diclofenac. The widespread use of this drug, as a veterinary medicine, resulted in almost total devastation of the vulture populations of south-east Asia, killing some 40 million vultures. Subsequently, this drug has been banned for veterinary use within that region. As a result of this ban, along with a massive and expensive conservation effort, there are the first signs of a recovery in vulture populations within the south-east Asian region.

Despite the fact that alternative safe and inexpensive drugs are readily available, Diclofenac has been authorized for use in domestic animals in Spain (where 80% European vultures live) and Italy and is now becoming widely available on the EU market. The IAF notes that, according to a technical dossier put together by SEO/BirdLife, RSPB and the Vulture Conservation Foundation, this will cause a European mass execution of the charismatic, endangered and ecologically valuable vultures.

Four rare vulture species are present in Europe, and all are protected by EU law. The Egyptian Vulture is threatened with extinction and listed as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List of Species and the Cinereous Vulture is listed as 'Near Threatened'. The Griffon Vulture and Bearded Vulture have recently recovered from very low populations after decades of conservation efforts. Millions of Euros have been invested in saving these European vultures. It is tragic and ironic that this investment is now in jeopardy through the use of a veterinary medicine which is well documented as being the cause of the virtual extinction of vulture populations elsewhere. Furthermore, the veterinary use of this drug in Europe will weaken the case to prevent its use in Africa as well as weakening the resolve to maintain the ban on its use in south-east Asia

The European Union and its Member States have a legal obligation to conserve vultures under the EU Birds Directive and under EU Veterinary Drugs legislation which requires the avoidance of ecological damage.

We call on the Governments of the European Union and of the Member States to take urgent action on these grounds and ban the veterinary use of Diclofenac as well as removing this agent immediately from the EU market.

Furthermore, we call on Veterinary bodies and organizations, including the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, to alert their membership and all who may be responsible for the treatment of animals. It is our belief that, in light of the fact that safe and affordable alternative medicines exist, the veterinary use of this drug is inappropriate and unethical.

Dr. Adrian Lombard.

President: International Association for Falconry and the Conservation of Birds of Prey.

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