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Non-detriment finding for scimitar-horned oryx (*Oryx dammah*)

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Scientific name: *Oryx dammah* (Cretzschmar, 1827)

Common names: Scimitar-horned oryx, white oryx, Sahara oryx

Norwegian name: Oryxantilope

Type of permit: CITES Appendix I; Norwegian CITES Regulation Annex 1, list A

Country of export: South Africa (ZA)

Country of import: Norway (NO)

Purpose and source: The proposal concerns the import of one scimitar-horned oryx (*Oryx dammah*) from South Africa (DOA Taxidermy) to Norway (Labrador Cargo APS) with purpose-of-transaction code H – hunting trophy. The specimen is a full-mounted hunting trophy of one male bred in captivity (source code C). The individual is documented to come from a game farm, and a hunting permit is documented.

For Appendix I species (Norwegian Cites Regulation Annex 1, list A) it is required to establish that import will not be detrimental to the survival of that species, in compliance with CITES Article III. In the Norwegian CITES regulation (Lovdata 2018) the criteria for import to Norway are described in Chapter 2, Section 4.

VKM has adopted the definition of detriment, cf. Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17) suggested by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Scientific Authority:

1. Harvest that is not sustainable.
2. Harvest that harms the status of the species in the wild.
3. Removal from the wild that results in habitat loss or destruction, or that interferes with recovery efforts for a species.

Conclusion

VKM concludes that the import of one hunting trophy of a scimitar-horned oryx (*Oryx dammah*) will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild.

The conclusion is based on the following factors:

- The individual and both of its parents were bred in captivity.
- South Africa is not part of the species' natural range, and the import of this individual will not have detrimental impact on the wild population.

1. Biological information

Distribution

Oryx dammah is a large herding antelope that was once widespread across the sub-desert zones in Africa, north and south of Sahara, from Mauritania and Morocco in the west to Egypt and Sudan in the east (Chuven et al., 2018). The species was between 2000 and 2022 classified as "Extinct in the wild" (EW), with the last male being reported shot in the Ouadi Kharma district in 1989 in Chad (J.E. Newby, in litt.).

Reintroduction of *Oryx dammah* to the wild started in August 2016 in the Ouadi-Rimé-Ouadi Achim Faunal Reserve in Chad. The IUCN Red List Guidelines state that a species can be recategorized out of the EW category after five years of being reintroduced or until viable offspring have been produced (whichever period is the longest). Births in the reintroduced population has been observed every year since the reintroduction. The population growth rate of the reintroduced population makes it highly likely that some of the females born on-site have reproduced. Since 2016, eight more releases have taken place, totalling 285 released individuals (IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group, 2023).

The reintroduced population is found in a free-ranging, unfenced reserve. Some individuals have been translocated to some fenced and partially fenced reserves in other parts of its previous range (Tunisia, Senegal, and Morocco), but these populations are currently not considered individually sustainable in the long term (IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group, 2023).

In captivity, the species is found in large numbers (IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group, 2016).

Life history

Female gestation length is 8-8.5 months, and under favourable environmental conditions or in captivity, most females reproduce every year. However, in the wild, environmental conditions affect the timing and the success of reproduction (Engel, 2004b). Twinning is rare (IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group, 2023).

The species is a migratory species, known to travel distances up to 1300 km per year in search of food and water (Engel, 2004a). To conserve water, the animals seek shade during the hottest times of the day, resulting in a crepuscular activity pattern with peak activity at dawn and dusk (Gilbert, 2022).

In the wild, *Oryx dammah* were observed in relatively small herds, ranging between 10-30 animals (Engel, 2004a), but during migrations numerous herds would join and aggregations of thousands were sometimes observed (Gilbert, 2022).

Role in the ecosystem

Oryx dammah used to inhabit the arid grasslands surrounding the Sahara, primarily feeding on various grasses and leguminous plants but also shifting to other foods where available (Engel, 2004a).

Prior to extinction, it is likely that wild populations of *Oryx dammah* were subject to predation from co-occurring large carnivores.

2. Population trend

The population trend is increasing after the reintroduction efforts since 2016 (IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group, 2023). The population estimate as per September 2022 was 575 animals, although with a wide 95 % confidence interval (227-1,452).

Following the lower confidence limit, a minimum of 140-160 mature individuals are present in the reintroduced population (IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group, 2023).

3. Conservation status

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group, 2023): Endangered (EN) under criteria D, assessed in 2022.

Note that the species was classified as Extinct in the wild (EW) the previous four assessments (in 2000, 2007, 2008, and 2016).

4. Threats

There are numerous reasons for the decline and subsequent extinction of *Oryx dammah* (Newby, 1988), including over-hunting and poaching, war, habitat loss, degradation through development, droughts, overgrazing, and competition with livestock (Wakefield et al. 2004). Young *Oryx dammah* may be predated by African wolves (*Canis lupaster*) in Tunisia, but the level of impact is uncertain (Petretto et al., 2020).

The threat of poaching and illegal killing of the individuals in the reintroduced population in Chad is considered to be low due to local patrolling and monitoring in addition to engagements of the local communities. However, with disperse farther away from the core zone, the threat from poaching is likely to increase (IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group, 2023).

5. Conservation and management measures:

International legislation

The species has been listed on CITES Appendix I since 1983 (UNEP, 2025). Commercial trade of this species is prohibited, but trade for scientific purposes may occur (e.g., exchange of individuals for captive breeding programmes). However, Appendix I specimens bred in captivity (source code C) may be traded for commercial purposes and shall be treated as wild specimens included in CITES Appendix II (CITES Article VII, paragraph 4).

The species is also listed on the Convention of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) Appendix I (CMS), on the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations Annex A since 2023 (UNEP, 2025), and protected under the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Under this convention the species is under total protection but may be hunted, killed or captured given special authorisation (Gilbert and Woodfine, 2004).

In Tunisia and Morocco, national strategies to restore the species are available (Cuzin et al., 2007).

Conservation measures

The project for reintroduction in Chad started in the early 2000s, with the first group being released in 2016. The reintroduced population in Chad is today under regular

monitoring. Several additional releases have taken place since 2016, and some individuals have also been translocated to reserves that are partially or fully fenced as part of the reintroduction programme (IUCN SSC Antelope Specialist Group, 2023).

Large numbers of *Oryx dammah* exist in captivity across the world. Coordinated breeding programmes exist across North American, European, and Australasian regions. *Oryx dammah* is included in the Source Population Alliance (SPA; a group of private landowners, conservation centres, and zoos representing ex-situ populations in the USA, Canada, and Australia) that work to maintain sustainable populations and genetic diversity for potential reintroductions and insurance against extinction.

6. Trade/use

Legal

Captive-bred individuals can be traded as CITES Appendix II species (CITES Article VII, paragraph 4).

Scimitar-horned oryx is a popular species for trophy hunting (see e.g., https://worldwidetrophyadventures.com/outfitterprofile?hunt_id=1438) and is extensively bred for this purpose, for example in Texas (e.g., <https://www.oxhuntingranch.com/texas/scimitar-horned-oryx-hunting/>) and across South Africa (e.g., <https://www.johnxsafaris.com/information/scimitar-oryx/>).

The main trade terms of *Oryx dammah* in the CITES Trade Database (2025) the past ten years (2014-2023) are trophies exported from South Africa or the United States. Earlier, the main source was "born in captivity" (source code F), but in the recent years (2022-2023), the main source is "bred in captivity" (source code C). A total of 582 trades with live individuals has been reported between 2014-2023, many to Chad (CITES Trade Database, 2025) for reintroduction purposes, as well as for zoos and for breeding in captivity.

Prior to extinction, locals hunted *Oryx dammah* for their meat and hide, their horns, and were used to make ropes, bags, and other products (Morrow et al., 2013).

Illegal

No records of illegal trade were found. However, one of the animals reintroduced in Chad was killed by a poacher, indicating that hunting remains a critical threat to this species (Chuyen et al., 2018).

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