Learning Objectives – Guide for Live Wildlife Crime Scene Investigation for Legal Representatives

Module 1. How to Secure and Record Evidence during Wildlife Crime/Trade Investigations

Part 1. Before arriving at the crime scene

Overview: Part 1 aims to show the complexity of investigating wildlife crimes, with practical solutions to help clearly identify whether a wildlife crime is in progress or has taken place. Where to source information, what information needs to be addressed (5WH) and how to record it. Legal considerations and preparation of an investigative team and equipment before attending a wildlife crime scene.

Part 2. Arrival at the Crime Scene

Overview: Part 2 focusses on attending a crime scene – establishing if it is a crime scene, safety precautions, how secure the scene, how to methodically search for, collect and record evidence. How to prepare samples for transportation and storage.

Objective: To provide context to the complexity of the issue of Wildlife Crime/Trade investigations. Provide a clear process to identify, investigate, collect admissible evidence, and maintain the chain of evidence, for the prosecution of participants in the wildlife trade network. This module addresses the following key challenges: lack of knowledge and understanding of wide-ranging implications; and improper methods (crime scene investigation and sample collection, taxa identification, handling, storage, and transport).

Module 2 How to identify species during wildlife crime/trade investigations

Overview: Species can be challenging to identify – but it is essential to identify them correctly in order to understanding if a crime is or has been being committed. This module methodically explains what information to record, how take photos, how to collect evidence and biological samples for DNA testing for each taxa.

Objective: To ensure animals are correctly identified by providing the tools and knowledge to correctly collect images, data and samples by investigators. Provide further clarity in maintaining a clear chain of evidence to facilitate the prosecution of perpetrators.

Module 3. Sample collection for DNA Analysis for Species Identification

Overview: This module provides an overview of DNA analysis. A list of specialized laboratories is included. A quick reference table is provided to determine how various samples are analysed. This chapter explains the possibilities and limitations of sample analysis – including DNA, stable isotopes, and faecal samples.

Objective: To give a base understanding of DNA analysis, advantages of each type of analysis and limitations, to ensure the correct samples are collected for evidence and analysed by a certified laboratory. Samples can provide evidence of provenance (which can further support species identification), length of time in captivity and evidence of malnourishment.

Module 4. Are the animals farmed or collected from the wild?

Overview: This module provides a guide for evaluating the seller, as well as the facilities and equipment used to transport/house the animals and red flags to look out for. The step-by-step introduction to examining an animal, including species, age, gender, markings or colourings, current behaviour (is the animal displaying normal behaviour or is there evidence of maltreatment), body condition and any identifiers (tags, microchips, tattoos…)

Objective: A brief and clear outline on assessing facilities, seller and short introduction to assessing the animal and its welfare. Specific detail on assessing each taxa is provided to operational front line staff.

Module 5. Preparedness for the Confiscation and Management of Life Wildlife as Evidence

Overview: Preparing for the confiscation of animals requires a specialized team. This module reviews the requirements of a confiscation unit, procedures, operating procedures, staff health and training requirements for WHS and resourcing.

Objective: To provide a baseline on requirements to establish a confiscation unit, protecting the health and welfare of the team and establishing operating procedures to ensure the best outcome for the animal(s), the investigation and potential prosecution of participants in the wildlife crime.

Module 9. Decision-Making Tree for Disposition of Confiscated Wildlife

Overview: Deciding on what should occur with a confiscated animal can be a complex process and the welfare of the animal should always be a priority. There are two clearly mapped decision-making pathways for confiscated animals included in this module – one for wild animals and deciding if they can be returned to the wild and options for management if they are not. A second reviews options available for captive animals to establish the best outcome for each animal.

Outcome: To facilitate clear decision making for the best outcome for the seized animal.