

Session III. Sanitary issues

Reptiles as Invasive species: Effects on environment and public health.

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While a lot of species are seriously threatened of extinction, other species become invasives and their true effect are actually unknown. The most affected country of this problem is United States, with the stonishing number of 46 exotic reptiles introduced only in Florida State! Green Iguana, Burmese Python or Nile Monitor are some exemples of this invasion. In Spain we have every time more and more species of reptiles, mainly tortoises, introduced in our habitats. The most known species is the red eared slider (*Trachemys scripta*). Nowadays, we known some effects of this species over our ecosystems, as competence with birds, other turtles and even plants or amphibians. Regarding the sanitary aspects of this biological invasion, we have described multiple pathologic disorders, and perhaps these are only a few of the real effects. We have described the presence of *Serpinema microcephalus* in the digestive tract of two american turtles introduced in Spain: red eared slider (*Trachemys scripta*) and river cooter (*Pseudemys concinna*). *S. microcephalus* is an Old World parasite that has been found parasitizing invasive turtles as a substitutive of autochtonous turtles. This parasitacion produces a digestive inflammatory reaction in exotic turtles that is not seen in the autochtonous ones. Disease observed varies from catarrhal to ulcerative enteritis, with some secondary hemorrhages sourrounding the parasitized areas. Other described diseases in wild spanish red eared sliders are one case of parasitic pancreatitis and one ovarian teratoma. European parasites have been describied affecting both native and feral turtles. But there is not demonstration of American parasites parasitizing native turtles. Finally, we known the high risk of zoonotic diseases as *Salmonella*. Recently, two cases of diarrhea cused by Salmonella have been describied in Valencia and Catalonia relating children and red eared sliders. The problem is, in fact, increasing. Is the punishing law enough to stop this bad situation? Of course, research, envirnomental education and field works are the most important tools we have to brake this huge problem in our ecosystems.