

Marine Mammal Commission
4340 East-West Highway, Room 905
Bethesda, MD 20814

29 June 2009

Mr. Timothy J. Van Norman
Chief, Branch of Permits
Division of Management Authority
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 North Fairfax Drive
Arlington, VA 22203

Re: Permit Application No. PRT-192878
(University of Illinois, Veterinary
Diagnostic Laboratory)

Dear Mr. Van Norman:

The Marine Mammal Commission, in consultation with its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, has reviewed the above-referenced permit application with regard to the goals, policies, and requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. We offer the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Service issue the requested permit, provided that—

- the applicant be required to obtain all necessary permits under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora before importing or exporting any marine mammal parts;
- the applicant maintain detailed records indicating the source of each specimen and the circumstances under which it was collected; and
- the applicant periodically provide reports to the Service sufficient to demonstrate that each specimen was taken in accordance with the laws of the country of origin, was not taken in violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act or other applicable U.S. laws, and is being used only for bona fide scientific purposes.

BACKGROUND

The applicant is requesting authorization to acquire and import an unspecified number of biological specimens (to include blood, sera, tissues, skin, hair, and bone) from manatees, dugongs, sea otters, marine otters, walruses, and polar bears. All samples would be obtained opportunistically from sources outside the United States (i.e., from qualified researchers holding permits, authorized research facilities, and licensed zoological facilities). The applicant states that, in most cases, samples will be obtained from naturally deceased animals although a few samples may be collected from captive animals. The applicant will use the samples for diagnostic evaluation of tissues obtained

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during outbreaks of disease or unusual natural mortalities and/or investigations into the ecology of diseases in free-ranging and captive populations. The applicant is requesting that the permit be issued for five years. The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Service issue the requested permit, provided that the applicant and the Service cooperate to meet the requirements listed above.

The Commission believes that the activities for which it has recommended approval are consistent with the purposes and policies of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and other applicable laws.

Please contact me if you have any questions concerning this recommendation.

Sincerely,



Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director