

### **Re-introduction of animals to the wild**

Conservationists are anxious to re-establish populations of endangered species in the wild whenever suitable habitat becomes available. Many zoos, worldwide, are committed to breeding and maintaining viable stocks of endangered animals to ensure that species which are becoming increasingly rare in the wild have a residual population in captivity. The logic underlying this approach is that captive bred stocks can be re-introduced to supplement wild stock or, in the worst case, actually to form a new population in the wild.

These activities are praiseworthy, there have already been successful re-introductions of a small number of mammalian species where those responsible carefully monitored the animals and did everything possible to promote their welfare both before and after release. Unfortunately, there have been some cases where lack of foresight and a failure to monitor their survival have resulted in distress to the animals and sometimes high mortality.

The *International Academy of Animal Welfare Sciences*, with the advice of experienced scientists in the field has just published welfare *Guidelines for the Re-introduction of Captive Bred Mammals to the Wild*. They are intended to supplement The *IUCN position statement on the translocation of living organisms: reintroduction and re-stocking* which considers the matter from the viewpoint of re-establishing viable populations.

The guidelines are intended to help all those contemplating the re-introduction of captive bred mammals to the wild. They describe the criteria for selecting individuals and provide information on procedures which may be adopted to optimize the well-being of re-introduced mammals. It is emphasized that a considerable commitment in time and resources may be necessary from those responsible for their re-introduction to ensure that individuals to be released are equipped with the skills necessary for their survival. Ecologists re-introducing captive bred mammals into the wild should accept responsibility for their well-being both before and after release. From a purely practical viewpoint, there is little doubt that good welfare is an important factor in ensuring the success of mammalian re-introductions.

**International Academy of Animal Welfare Sciences 1992 *Welfare Guidelines for the Re-introduction of Captive Bred Mammals to the Wild*. 10 Pp. Universities Federation for Animal Welfare: Potters Bar. Price £2.50 post free.**