

Through risk assessments we know that some exotic pet species could become invasive if released into the wild. Some of these species have been classified by the EU as Species of Union Concern, which means strict restrictions apply, including that they are no longer allowed to be sold or exchanged, while some are of more local concern. Some examples are shown below:

EU Species of Union Concern

The Red-eared, Yellow-bellied, and Cumberland sliders



If released into the wild, these three terrapin species may alter ecosystems by competing with native species for food, preying upon native species, and disturbing habitats. They are also known to carry parasites and pathogens. They have been designated a Widely Spread Species in NI, with management measures in place to minimise their impact.

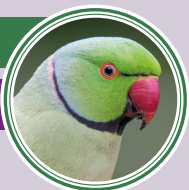
Raccoon



If allowed to escape, they can have severe impacts on native biodiversity, robbing eggs, chicks and adults of native and domestic bird species. They are also known to carry parasites and diseases, some of which may be fatal to humans.

Of Local Concern

Ring-necked parakeet



If allowed to escape, these birds may outcompete native hole-nesting species for habitat. They are known to damage commercially important fruit trees, to outcompete native species at garden bird feeders and large flocks can become a noise nuisance.



Find out more about invasive species and how you can help stop the spread at:

<https://invasivespeciesni.co.uk>

If you see an invasive species, **report it** on CEDaR or iRecord:



<https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>



<https://irecord.org.uk/>



The release of an exotic pet into the wild could damage our native wildlife.

Some exotic pet species are classified as **Species of Union Concern**.

It is illegal to **own, sell or exchange** these species in NI, because of the great risk they may pose to our native species.

Invasive Species Northern Ireland



Be a Pet **WISE** Pet Trader

The import of animals is essential for the pet industry. However, the deliberate or accidental release of these animals into the wild can result in them becoming invasive, negatively impacting surrounding ecosystems, our economy and society.

EU Regulation (1143/2014) imposes strict restrictions on species listed as a Species of Union Concern. Once listed, these species can no longer be sold, however, to allow for stock clearance, those species newly listed can still be traded for 12 months after listing.

Here are some things you can do as a pet trader to help prevent the release/escape of exotic pets:

Check: Ensure imported consignments do not contain hitchhikers, misidentified species (especially listed species), parasites or pathogens. If these escape, they can go on to become invasive.

Biosecurity: Ensure the secure keeping of all animals and live food associated with them.

Care Sheets: Allow your customer to make a well-informed decision about any potential pet by providing care sheets. Before purchasing any animal, customers should be sure they can look after it and understand the methods to securely house it.

Educate: The pet trade can play an important role in educating customers about the negative impacts the release of exotic pets can have.

Don't let it loose!

If the animal can survive and establish in the wild it may become invasive and have many negative impacts on surrounding ecosystems, such as:

- Outcompeting native species for food and shelter
- Preying upon native species
- Altering food webs
- Spreading diseases
- Destroying habitats



Raccoon Dog



Siberian Chipmunk



Common Kingsnake

Some pet owners are under the illusion that it is kinder to release their pets when they no longer want them, however:

- Many exotic animals require special conditions to survive
- Their needs may not be met in the wild
- It could be stressful and hazardous for the animal
- They could face injury, disease, or death

Be a Pet **WISE** Pet Owner

Do thorough research before purchasing an exotic pet. A well-informed decision can help reduce the number of pets which are released by owners who can no longer manage.

If in doubt, do not proceed!

Things to consider before becoming a pet owner:

Is it legal?

Under the EU Regulation (1143/2014), it is no longer legal to buy any species listed as a Species of Union Concern.

Have you received enough information about the animal? Do you know:

- What size it will grow to?
- Any common behavioural traits?
- It's life expectancy?
- How much time is involved in its care?
- What costs are involved?
- How to keep it securely housed without escape?

The animal's food and any diseases or pathogens it can carry may also go on to become invasive.

- Have you been informed by your pet supplier of what practices you can adopt to prevent this?

Even if all precautions are taken, a pet may just become unmanageable for you.

NEVER RELEASE YOUR PET INTO THE WILD

You must re-home your pet humanely and responsibly but if your pet is one of the banned species, you need to contact the NIEA INNS Team: invasivespecies@daera-ni.gov.uk