Comparison of rehabilitation and euthanasia rates of birds of prey at a UK raptor rehabilitation centre in 2007 and 2017

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OBJECTIVES

The proportion of rescued birds rehabilitated and released into the wild in a UK raptor rehabilitation were compared between 2007 and 2017 after greater enforcement by the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs of legislation regarding temporary captivity of birds for rehabilitation.

METHODS

Records kept by the rehabilitation centre for raptors brought to the centre were evaluated to determine which

birds were subsequently treated and released, treated and retained alive as unable to be released, treated and died, or euthanased on welfare grounds. Proportions were compared for 2007 and 2017.

RESULTS

Proportions of birds which were released, died, were euthanased or kept in captivity were 59.8%, 28.6%, 9.8% and 1.8% in 2007 and 30.3%, 30.4%, 39.4% and 0% in 2017. A significant difference was determined between birds released in 2007 and 2017 ($p = 0.007$) and birds euthanased in those years ($p = 0.0001$). There was not a significant difference in birds that died between the two years. Significantly more kestrels were admitted in 2017 and Tawny owls in 2007 but differences in these numbers did not account for the variation in proportion released or euthanased between 2007 and 2017.

STATEMENT (CONCLUSIONS)

The greater number of birds released in 2007 compared with 2017 and euthanased in 2017 compared with 2007 were most likely related to increased enforcement of legislation requiring the centre to euthanase birds which could not rapidly be rehabilitated and released. Whether this change is beneficial to the individual birds or the avian population is a topic worthy of further discussion.

Do rodents in radioactive areas around Chernobyl, Ukraine have high prevalence of cataracts?

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OBJECTIVES

Previous reports suggested that rodents in the highly radioactive zones of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone have increased prevalence of cataracts, these seen at post-mortem examination. While radiation-induced cataractogenesis might be conceivable in long-lived birds, and 25% of the liquidators who sought to control the spread of radiation after the nuclear disaster in 1986 developed cataracts characteristic of radiation exposure 15 years after the disaster, bank voles and field mice, which only

live for up to 2 years, are unlikely to develop cataracts with the levels of radiation now seen around the contaminated reactor site. This study investigated the lenses of live bank voles and field mice trapped around Chernobyl as part of a study on radiation-induced disease.

METHODS

Rodent species were trapped in a number of areas around the Chernobyl radiation contamination exclusion zone and examined ophthalmoscopically with slit-lamp biomicroscopy. Degree of correlation was evaluated between prevalence of cataract and level of radioactive contamination in the area from which the animal was trapped. A control population from the UK was also examined.

RESULTS

While small lens opacities were noted, these were not the substantial mature cataracts noted in previous reports of animals examined after death. No correlation could be made between cataract prevalence and radioactivity in the areas from which the animals were obtained.

STATEMENT (CONCLUSIONS)

If cataract were associated with the levels of radioactivity noted around Chernobyl our understanding of radiation safety would have to change. As it is, there does not seem to be such a correlation in the rodents around Chernobyl.