

is expected to take some considerable time following a 99 per cent decline, the absence of diclofenac in the environment has ensured it is at least achievable.

The critically important vulture population in Europe has never been numerically similar to populations seen historically in the Indian subcontinent and therefore would be expected to be particularly susceptible to any additional cause of mortality. There are four rare vulture species in Europe protected by EU law, namely the griffon, bearded, Egyptian and cinereous vultures, and significant EU investment has already been provided towards the conservation of these species. The BVZS is therefore extremely concerned to learn that diclofenac has been authorised for use in Spain and Italy for use in domestic livestock, as any additional threat to the indigenous vulture population would be unwelcome.

The BVZS considers there is not only an obligation to preserve our European vulture populations under the EU Birds Directive, but also a responsibility to demonstrate to those countries that have already banned diclofenac for veterinary use that Europe takes a similar serious view to vulture conservation.

The BVZS therefore fully supports the Vulture Conservation Foundation's campaign seeking the immediate withdrawal of the product authorisation for diclofenac in the EU. Further information can be obtained from the BVZS website at www.bvzs.org

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WE write to express our concern regarding the recent authorisation of the NSAID, diclofenac, in certain member states of the EU. For background, a number of the British Veterinary Zoological Society (BVZS) members have over a decade of ongoing involvement in the field of vulture conservation worldwide. The role of the legal use of diclofenac in the precipitous decline of the vultures in the Indian subcontinent is well recognised and led to the statutory authorities in the range countries legislating to ban the medication for veterinary use.

Following the imposition of the ban, diclofenac has been replaced by a number of alternative licensed NSAIDs in the Indian subcontinent, without any apparent adverse impact on the welfare of the target domestic livestock species. The alternative anti-inflammatory medications currently appear to be demonstrably safe should they be ingested by vultures. This chain of events is regarded as one of the conservation successes of the past decade, driven by evidence-based science. Although the recovery of vulture populations in the range countries

Diclofenac and vulture populations

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