



Griffon vultures would be killed by eating any livestock carcass containing the veterinary drug diclofenac.

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REDS HIT BY NEW VIRUS

New advice to protect squirrels in your garden.

Researchers have identified a new threat to British red squirrels in the form of a disease of the digestive system.

Adenovirus produces lesions in the gut that cause diarrhoea and intestinal bleeding and can be fatal. Up to 45 per cent of red squirrels carry the virus, but not all animals go on to develop the disease.

Red squirrels may be catching the virus from wood mice, which also carry it, but there is no evidence for this yet, according to Dr Craig Shuttleworth, who co-authored a paper on adenovirus in the journal *Mammal Review*.

Red squirrels are also badly affected by exposure to squirrelpox virus, which is carried by greys.



VULTURE DRUG FACES EU BAN

CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT SPAIN'S VULTURE POPULATION TAKES STEP FORWARD.

A veterinary drug that caused vulture declines of more than 99 per cent over two decades in South-east Asia could soon be banned in the EU.

Conservationists have been pushing for a ban since diclofenac was authorised for sale in Spain last year. The Iberian peninsular is home to 90 per cent of Europe's vultures.

The European Commission (EC) took the first step towards making diclofenac illegal when its European Medicines Agency (EMA) initiated a public consultation on the risks to vultures and other carrion-feeders of eating carcasses containing the drug.

José Tavares, of the Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF), which has been leading the argument against diclofenac, said that griffon and black vultures were most likely to feed on contaminated carcasses, but bearded and Egyptian vultures could be impacted, too. Spanish imperial eagles may also be vulnerable, he added.

"The body of scientific evidence, and the number of organisations, scientists and members of the public expressing alarm over this drug is a significant argument against it," he said. "The fact that there is an alternative that is not toxic to vultures also helps."

The company that markets diclofenac in Europe has said that labelling and guidelines should be sufficient to minimise the risk to vultures, but the VCF says this would not be sufficient.

Diclofenac has been banned in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh for nearly a decade. Research published in 2013 suggested vulture numbers have since stabilised in that part of the world and, in some cases, may be rising slightly. **James Fair**

⊕ TAKE ACTION

Find out about the Vulture Conservation Foundation at www.4vultures.org

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If you have red squirrels in your garden, clean feeders and deter mice with baffles. <http://bit.ly/1tK3qYp>

CONSERVATION briefing

WHALING ILLEGAL

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) has backed the recent World Court judgment ruling that Japan's scientific whaling programme is illegal. Conservation groups called on Japan to abandon any plans to resume whaling in the light of the IWC resolution.



POCHARD TROUBLE

The chicks of one of the world's rarest birds – the Madagascar pochard – suffer a 96 per cent death rate before they fledge, researchers say. It's believed young pochards starve because the single lake to which the species confined is too deep to allow them to forage for food.

