

Non-detriment finding for ocellated spinytail (*Uromastyx ocellata*)

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Non-detriment finding for ocellated spinytail (*Uromastyx ocellata*)

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Competing interests: The authors declare no competing interests in relation to this non-detriment finding (NDF).

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Scientific name: *Uromastyx ocellata* Lichtenstein, 1823.

Common names: Eyed dabb lizard, ocellated mastigure, ocellated spinytail.

Norwegian name: Pigghaleagam.

Type of permit: CITES Appendix II export; Norwegian CITES Regulation Annex 1, list B

Country of export: Norway (NO)

Country of import: Germany (DE)

Purpose and source: The proposal concerns the export of 45 live, captive-bred ocellated spinytails (*Uromastyx ocellata*; CITES Appendix II; source code C) from Norway to Germany (purpose-of-transaction code T – commercial).

For Appendix II species (Norwegian CITES Regulation Annex 1, list A), it is required to establish that export will not be detrimental to the survival of that species, in compliance with CITES Article IV. In the Norwegian CITES regulation (Lovdata, 2018), the criteria for export from Norway are described in Chapter 2, Section 5, and it is required to establish that the export does not have a harmful effect on the conservation status of the species.

VKM has adopted the definition of detriment, cf. Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17) suggested by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Scientific Authority:

1. Harvest that is not sustainable.
2. Harvest that harms the status of the species in the wild.
3. Removal from the wild that results in habitat loss or destruction, or that interferes with recovery efforts for a species.

Conclusion: *Positive*

VKM concludes that the export from Norway to Germany of 45 live ocellated spinytails (*Uromastix ocellata*) bred in captivity will not have a harmful effect on the conservation status of the species.

The individuals in question, and their parents, were bred in captivity and have had no contact with wild conspecifics. Therefore, the export is not likely to have any harmful effects on the conservation status of the species in the wild.

1. Biological information

Distribution

The ocellated spinytail is found in northeastern Africa, where it occurs in isolated subpopulations adapted to rocky desert wadis (i.e., ephemeral watercourses) with acacia trees (Spawls, 2021 and references therein). Range states include Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan (UNEP, 2025).

Life history

Around six weeks after mating, the female lays 6–20 large eggs in a burrow that hatch after 3–4 months, and sexual maturity is reached at 3–4 years (Skei, 2025). Generation length is estimated to be 9–11 years (Spawls, 2021), and individuals can live up to 25 years in captivity (Skei, 2025). The species typically forms colonies (Spawls, 2021).

Role in the ecosystem

The ocellated spinytail is a diurnal species that feeds mainly on leaves of Acacia trees which it reaches by climbing (Spawls, 2021).

2. Population trend

In 2014, the global population was estimated to number at least several hundred thousand individuals. The population trend was assessed as decreasing, but not severely fragmented (Spawls et al., 2021).

3. Conservation status

The ocellated spinytail is assessed as Least Concern in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Spawls, 2021; assessment made in 2014 and in need of updating).

4. Threats

The ocellated spinytail is targeted by the international pet trade, with limited monitoring across its range. Its ecology with a tendency to form colonies in accessible habitats makes large-scale collection easy, possibly posing localized threats. Habitat loss, especially in Egypt, adds further pressure (Spawls, 2021 and references therein).

5. Conservation and management measures:

International legislation

The species is listed in CITES Appendix II and in the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations Annex B (UNEP, 2025).

National legislation

The ocellated spinytail is one of 19 reptile species legally permitted for private ownership in Norway, as regulated by national legislation (Lovdata, 2017).

Conservation measures

Egypt has banned exports, and Ethiopia enforces a quota (see Trade/use section below). Protected areas exist, especially in Egypt, covering approximately 50% of its range. Yet, monitoring and national regulations are needed to prevent overharvesting, particularly in Sudan (Spawls, 2021 and references therein).

6. Trade/use

Legal

For 2025, Ethiopia has a CITES export quota of 500 live individuals (reduced from 3,600 to 500 individuals in 2005 and stable since) (UNEP, 2025).

According to CITES Wildlife TradeView (2025), trade in wild specimens (source code W) in the period 2015-2024 consists of 8,305 live individuals exported from Sudan, with the United States of America and Japan being the main importing countries. In 2023, the EU Scientific Review Group issued a negative opinion for import of specimens of ocellated spinytail from Sudan (SRG 98 Soc, 2023). Notably, no trade in wild specimens have been recorded in 2023 or 2024 (CITES Wildlife TradeView, 2025).

Illegal

Limited information exists, although rates of illegal trade appear to be low in Sudan (Spawls, 2021).

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