

## ZOONOSIS AND SOCIETAL PERCEPTION OF WILDLIFE – A SWEDISH PERSPECTIVE

Thulin C-G<sup>1</sup>, Malmsten J<sup>2</sup>, Ericsson G<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Wildlife, Fish and Environmental Studies, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Skogmarksgränd, 901 83 Umeå, Sweden

<sup>2</sup> Department of Clinical Sciences, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Ulls väg 12, 750 07 Uppsala, Sweden

### Abstract

As much as 60% of emerging infectious diseases has a zoonotic origin, of which a majority originate from wildlife. In addition, there seem to be a trend of steadily increasing number of incidences. Consequently, there is an increased public and scientific attention given to zoonotic diseases emerging from wildlife populations. Although justified from a public health perspective, one potential outcome of this is an increased awareness and freight of wildlife, in particular in close vicinity to urban areas, houses and farms. There is also an aspect of short-term interest in acquiring grants for all so well motivated scientific efforts with regard to zoonotic potential. Thus, a trade-off between public health, research funding and induced detachment between man and nature emerge. In Sweden, we have a legal right of common access, “Legal Right of Access to Private Land”, which enables people to freely explore non-populated nature areas and also pick wild berries and mushrooms. This legal right, in association with an overall sparsely populated country, has most likely contributed to a strong societal interest and passion for nature and wildlife. Here, we address how an increased medial, scientific and overall societal focus on, in particular, zoonotic diseases affect this relationship. We also ask if this focus affect the overall incitement for preserving biological diversity and may shift the fundamental baseline for societal perception of wildlife. The implications of such a ‘shifting baseline’ is discussed based on results from regular enquires conducted to monitor societal perception of, and opinion about, wildlife populations.

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