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## **WILDPRO MULTIMEDIA: AN ELECTRONIC MANUAL ON THE HEALTH, MANAGEMENT, AND NATURAL HISTORY OF CAPTIVE AND FREE-RANGING ANIMALS**

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### **Abstract**

Professionals concerned about the health and management of wild animals, both free-ranging and captive, often encounter situations involving unfamiliar species or conditions. The breadth and depth of the information resources available to resolve these issues varies widely depending on position and location. This is particularly important in developing countries and remote sites. Paradoxically, in many of these circumstances access to textbooks or libraries are limited, but computers are readily available. To address these needs, the *WILDPro* project is taking an innovative approach which could redefine the structure of reference materials. In contrast to standard print textbooks and journals, containing prose organized in a linear fashion, *WildPro* presents facts succinctly, with multiple rapid links to other relevant data. The extensive use of photographs, video and audio components reinforces the material, in a manner unavailable in books. Through this method, information ordinarily contained in a shelf of print volumes can be condensed and distilled into convenient CD-ROM form, as well as accessed through the Internet World Wide Web.

*WILDPro's* organizational structure is inspired by the interrelationships of individual animals, disease agents and the environment, which underlie the presence of health or disease in all animals. Information arranged within these groups, is presented in an intuitive and practical manner, using dynamic interconnecting links, and offered in a manner to be accessible to those of various backgrounds and educational levels. The applications of this concept can best be demonstrated by a variety of potential *WILDPro* applications:

- A biologist/veterinarian working in a conservation area in Africa is asked to assist in the translocation of a group of gazelles from one area of the park to another. To accomplish this task, he/she would need to address the best procedure for animal capture, ranges of body weights, recommended doses of anesthetic drugs, and standards of construction transport containers.
  
- Port customs officials find improper paperwork on shipment of marmosets, and must delay the cargo until the documents are corrected. They must then determine the best conditions for holding these animals considering their needs for appropriate food, temperature, humidity, etc.

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- Patrolling rangers discover 500 dead birds around the edge of a park lake. They must rapidly determine what samples and information are needed so that the cause of this mortality can be determined, and actions taken to reduce further losses.

To assess the viability and relevance of the concept, a *WILDPro* prototype has been created and distributed to over 300 wildlife professionals (biologists, CITES officials, zoo directors and curators, wildlife managers and veterinarians) in 61 countries for their assessment and comments. Of the 128 respondents, 96% felt that a fully developed version of *WILDPro* will be useful to wildlife professionals; 82% further indicated that they would be likely to use *WILDPro* as a reference on a regular basis. Although the prototype is representative of the potential future product, it is not robust enough to manage the profusion of data, and the needs for constant revisions and expansions, therefore the development of a complex database architecture is now underway. Once completed, data input can begin, with the availability of at least one module late in 1999.