



Western Quail Working Group

Inter-state Quail Translocation Position Statement and Guidelines

The Western Quail Working Group (WQWG) was established and approved through the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) in July 2009. Members of the WQWG include representatives from state and federal wildlife agencies who are knowledgeable about these quail species and have management responsibilities within their respective jurisdiction, or in the case of the federal agencies, have land management responsibilities and oversight. The WQWG is uniquely positioned to offer leadership and guidance for restoration projects, including translocation of wild quail species.

Position Statement

It is the position of the WQWG that reintroduction, augmentation or introduction of wild populations of western quail species through translocation—under appropriate circumstances described herein—can be an effective population restoration tool to achieve biological success. We are not generally supportive of the introduction of non-endemic wild quail species. Our position is that a wild quail translocation project (a single property or cooperative of properties) is ultimately biologically successful if a self-sustaining wild population persists for greater than 10 years after translocation efforts have ended. Long-term performance that exceeds this minimum threshold is preferred, such as higher population levels, and/or geographic expansion of the population beyond initial project boundaries.

Guidelines

The movement of wildlife across state lines falls under the purview of state wildlife agencies. Furthermore, states may have their own legal mandates or guidelines more restrictive than those described herein. This document has been developed solely to provide guidance to resource managers considering quail translocations and to create a mechanism to inform future decision making regarding quail population management. Further research is needed to establish translocation Best Management Practices specific to individual western quail species. The recommended protocol for inter-state quail translocation includes 3 major categories:

1. Official Letter of Request
2. Proposal
3. Post-Release Reporting

Official letter of request

In order to avoid potential miscommunication, it is paramount program leads from both the source and requesting state wildlife agencies be informed and involved early in the process. The submission of an official letter of request for interstate quail translocation, sent by the requesting state program lead to the source state wildlife agency director facilitates this process. If the request is coming from another entity such as a Federal Agency, Non-Governmental Organization or private party, then the official letter of request should be sent to both source and requesting state wildlife agencies directors with copies addressed to the program leads. The official request letter and preliminary proposal need to be sent far enough in advance of the desired translocation to allow adequate time for consideration, decision making, and logistical preparation. Additional time is necessary as some states require the requesting agency/entity to obtain permits (such as Scientific Collecting Permits or State Board of Agriculture Importation Permits) or other reporting requirements to conduct translocations. Any requests for assistance from the source agency should be explicitly stated in the letter of request and the proposal. Once initial approval is granted, a detailed proposal should be developed and provided to the source agency well in advance of proposed field work.

Proposal

Translocation proposals should include enough detail to allow evaluation of all components of the project, including the impact to natural resources, animal welfare, and details about the release location. A well-designed proposal includes the following elements:

1. Purpose of the release – reintroduction, augmentation, or introduction into suitable habitat
2. Justification for release – including a habitat evaluation or habitat suitability index
3. Release site description – including size of property or project area, historic habitat conditions, current habitat conditions, ownership, long-term management plans, connectivity, etc.
4. Reintroduction/restocking - Historic and current density of the species at the proposed release site
5. Translocation Methods -trapping/handling/ transport /release
6. *Disease/parasite testing, response procedures, and disease risk analysis (see below)*
7. Proximity of release to large domestic poultry or gamebird operations
8. Proposed source location/ownership
9. Expected timeline/multi-year request/timing of release
10. Target numbers/age ratio/sex ratio
11. Any previous translocation efforts/experience
12. *Monitoring protocols(see below)*

If information is insufficient for program leads to fully evaluate the project, project approval is likely to face significant delays until concerns are addressed.

Disease and Parasite Considerations

The WQWG recognizes the need for mandatory testing for poultry-specific diseases. The National Poultry Improvement Plan is a voluntary program administered cooperatively by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, various states, and the poultry industry since the 1930s. This plan specifies disease testing and monitoring for poultry, turkeys, waterfowl, and game birds. The program includes testing for *Salmonella pullorum* and *S. enteritidis*, avian influenza, *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*, *M. synoviae*, and *M. meleagridis*. Because of variations in state testing requirements, we also recommend testing for diseases and parasites specific to game birds and geographic areas. This list may be amended or refined based on recommendations from the WAFWA Wildlife Health Committee. Diseases and pathogens to consider testing/screening for include, but are not limited to:

1. Salmonella – blood test
2. *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* and *M. synoviae* – blood test or oropharyngeal swabs
3. Avian influenza – blood test or oropharyngeal swabs
4. Quail bronchitis (adenovirus) – fecal or oropharyngeal swabs
5. Cryptosporidium - fecal
6. Coccidia – fecal
7. Capillaria (gapeworm) - fecal
8. *Trichomonas gallinae* – oropharyngeal swabs
9. Ulcerative enteritis/colitis (*Clostridium colinum*) – necropsy, anaerobic culture, fecal gram stain or PCR
10. Pox virus – physical exam
11. GI parasites - fecal
12. Inspection for other external parasites

Monitoring Protocols

Each source state may have certain conditions of project approval including, but not limited to, population and habitat monitoring. Interim measures of progress over at least 5 years should include, at a minimum, annual monitoring to document presence/absence. Other measures may include:

- Estimates of survival and carry-over of translocated birds, and overall population status.
- Documentation of reproduction by translocated birds.
- Active habitat management to maintain enough area to support a viable population.

Requesting agencies/entities are encouraged to incorporate research or monitoring efforts that provide information on the demographics of the translocated population to inform trapping and release techniques.

Post-release Reporting

Similar to monitoring, each source state may have different conditions for project approval. The WQWG suggest the following key elements be included in annual and final reports:

Annual reports:

1. Numbers/age ratio/sex ratio and location(s) of quail captured and released
2. Capture and transport mortality, carcass disposition
3. Site fidelity of translocated quail
4. Survival rates of translocated quail
5. Production rates of translocated quail
6. Modifications from original proposal
7. Evaluation of trap, transport and release methods
8. Results of disease screening (first annual report)

Final report - the aforementioned information as well as:

1. Population status
2. Evaluation of the translocation effort
3. Habitat management/maintenance plans to ensure long-term success
4. Why translocation failed (if applicable)
5. Other lessons learned

Additional data or information may be requested by program leads to help guide future management decisions.

Program leads will provide an annual update on quail translocations to and from their respective states during the annual meeting of WQWG.

References:

Western Quail Working Group:

https://www.wafwa.org/committees_groups/western_quail_working_group

National Poultry Improvement Plan:

<https://www.poultryimprovement.org/documents/ProgramStandardsJanuary2017.pdf>

WAFWA Wildlife Health Committee:

https://www.wafwa.org/committees_groups/committees/wildlife_health_committee/