Salamander Fungus: Lacey Act to Keep Out 201 Foreign Amphibians

By **Samantha Mathewson**   Jan 25, 2016 12:57 PM EST

Roughly 201 salamander species were recently listed as injurious wildlife - or those likely to cause harm - under Lacey Act by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Researchers say that keeping these particular foreign amphibians out of the country will help prevent the fungus *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans*, also known as Bsal or salamander chytrid, from spreading into the U.S., which is a global hotspot for salamander diversity.

"This action should be seen as an effective step toward controlling a serious threat from a wildlife pathogen and the response from the Service to the issue has been admirable," Reid Harris, Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA) director of international disease mitigation, said in a news release.

An interim rule published in the Federal Register will go into effect Jan. 28 and addresses 20 genera of salamander species, which are thought to be potential carriers of the fungal pathogen.

Following major salamander die-offs in Europe, researchers have become increasingly concerned about the widespread impact the fungus could have on biodiversity in the U.S. Therefore, any importation or movement of the 20 listed species into or around the country is banned without proper permits.

"That said, it's clear that halting the trade in any large group of animals has many challenges and as we move forward with dealing with an increasing number of wildlife health issues we need to consider effective ways of preventing the spread of wildlife pathogens, while allowing a clean trade program to exist," Harris added.

Further studies are in the works to determine if any non-listed genera are carriers of Bsal, too. Researchers are also making preparations to mitigate the pathogen if it finds its way into new territory.

When infected with Bsal, salamanders may suffer from skin lesions, anorexia, apathy, ataxia, and, in extreme cases, even death.