National Wild Pheasant Technical Committee

Colorado Idaho Indiana Illinois Iowa Kansas Michigan Minnesota Missouri
Montana Nebraska New Mexico New York North Dakota Ohio Oklahoma
Oregon Pennsylvania South Dakota Texas Utah Washington Wisconsin

Interstate Pheasant Translocation Position Statement and Guidelines

The National Wild Pheasant Technical Committee (NWPTC) consists of pheasant biologists representing close to two dozen state wildlife agencies within the species' range. The Technical Committee identifies and constructs science-based strategies and products, including The National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan, needed for the national conservation of the species. NWPTC is uniquely situated to offer leadership and guidance for restoration projects, including the translocation of wild pheasant.

Position Statement

It is the position of the NWPTC that the reintroduction, restocking or establishment of wild pheasant through translocation—under appropriate circumstances described herein—can be an effective population restoration tool to achieve biological success.

Pheasant translocations should only occur for establishing a self-sustaining population within suitable habitat for the purpose of hunting and recreation opportunities.

A wild pheasant translocation project is ultimately biologically successful if a self-sustaining wild population persists at huntable levels for the long term (>5 years) after translocation has ended. Long-term performance that exceeds this minimum threshold is preferred, such as increasing population and/or geographic expansion of the population beyond the initial project boundaries.

Guidelines

The movement of wildlife across state lines falls under the purview of state natural resource agencies. Furthermore, states have their own legal mandates and stakeholders which supersede those of other entities. This document has been developed solely to provide guidance to resource managers considering pheasant translocations and to create a mechanism to inform future decision-making regarding pheasant population management. Further research is needed for Best Management Practices that maximize the likelihood of successful pheasant translocations. The recommended protocol for interstate pheasant translocation includes three major categories:

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

1. Official letter of request

In order to avoid potential miscommunication, it is paramount that program leads from both the source and receiving state wildlife agencies be informed and involved early in the process. This can be facilitated by the submission of an official letter of request for an interstate pheasant translocation sent by the receiving state program lead to the source state wildlife agency. 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 the source and receiving state wildlife agencies with copies addressed to the program leads.

The official request letter needs to be sent far enough in advance of the desired translocation to allow adequate time for consideration, decision making, and logistical preparation. The 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) to perform work related to translocations which may have other reporting requirements in addition to those outlined here.

Any requests for assistance from the source agency should be explicitly stated in the letter of request as well as the proposal. An official letter of consent from the source state should be secured prior to any further progress. Once initial approval is granted, a detailed proposal should be developed and provided to the source agency well in advance of proposed field work.

2. Proposal

Translocation proposals that 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 are more likely to be considered. A well-designed proposal includes the following elements:

A. Purpose of the release – reintroduction, restocking (augment existing populations), or introduction (into suitable habitat). Authors should include:
    a. Habitat evaluation or HSI of proposed release site
    b. Introduction – justification and support for release
    c. Reintroduction - historic and current densities and justification for augmentation, genetic concerns etc.
B. Release site description – including size of property or project area, historic habitat conditions, current habitat conditions, ownership, long-term management plans, connectivity, etc.
C. Translocation methods – trapping, handling, and release
D. *Disease/parasite testing, response procedures, and disease risk analysis*[*]

E. Proximity of release to large domestic poultry or gamebird operations
F. Proposed source location/ownership
G. Expected timeline / multi-year request / timing of release
H. Target number of birds per year and total, including age and sex ratios
I. Any previous translocation efforts/experience
J. *Monitoring protocols*[**]

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

Disease and Parasite Considerations

The NWPTC recognizes the need for mandatory testing for poultry-susceptible diseases. The National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) is a voluntary program administered cooperatively by the USDA, various states, and the poultry industry since the 1930's. This plan specifies disease testing and monitoring for poultry, which under NPIP definitions include pheasants and other resident game birds. The program includes testing for *Salmonella pullorum and S. enteritidus,* avian influenza, *Mycoplasma gallisepticum, M. synoviae, and M. meleagridis.* Because of variation in state testing requirements, we also recommend testing for diseases and parasites specific to game birds and geographic area. Diseases and pathogens to consider testing/screening for include, but are not limited to:

A. Avian influenza – blood test or oropharyngeal swabs
B. *Histomoniasis* – fecal test
C. *Salmonella* – blood test
D. *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* and *M. synoviae* – blood test or oropharyngeal swabs
E. *Cryptosporidium* – fecal test
F. *Coccidia* – fecal test
G. *Capillaria* (gapeworm) – fecal test
H. *Trichomonas gallinae* – oropharyngeal swabs
I. Ulcerative enteritis/colitis (*Clostridium colinum*) – necropsy, anaerobic culture, fecal gram stain, or PCR
J. Pox virus – physical exam
K. Gastrointestinal parasites – fecal test
L. 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 five years could include:

A. Annual monitoring to document presence/absence at a minimum
B. Estimates of survival and carry-over of translocated birds, and overall population status

C. Documentation of reproduction by translocated birds
D. Assessment of active habitat management to maintain enough area to support a viable population through management tracking and habitat suitability surveys

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

3. Post Release Reporting

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

Annual reports:

A. Numbers/age ratio/sex ratio and location(s) of pheasant captured and released
B. Capture and transport mortality, carcass disposition
C. Disease monitoring results
D. Site fidelity of translocated pheasant (if available)
E. Survival rates of translocated pheasant (if available)
F. Production rates of translocated pheasant (if available)
G. Modifications from original proposal
H. Evaluation of trap, transport and release methods
I. Results of release site disease screening (first annual report)
J. Harvest information (if applicable)

Final report - the aforementioned information as well as:

A. Population status
B. Evaluation of the translocation effort
C. Habitat management/maintenance efforts to date, monitoring, and plans to ensure long-term success
D. Why translocation failed (if applicable)
E. Other lessons learned

Additional data or information may be requested by the program leads to help guide future management decisions. Program leads will be expected to provide an annual update on pheasant translocations to and from their respective states during the annual meeting of NWPTC.