

New study shows vulture-killing drug kills eagles too

Title

The results of tests carried out on two Steppe Eagles *Aquila nipalensis* found dead in Rajasthan, India, have shown some worrying results.

One of the two birds had diclofenac residue in its tissues and exhibited the same clinical signs of kidney failure as seen in vultures.

Scientists now fear that all species in this genus, known as *Aquila* (which includes Golden *A. chrysaetos* and Spanish Imperial Eagle *A. adalberti*), are susceptible to diclofenac. With fourteen species of *Aquila* Eagle distributed across Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe and North America, this means that diclofenac poisoning should now be considered largely a global problem.

Dr Toby Galligan, RSPB conservation scientist and one of the authors of the paper published in BirdLife's journal *Bird Conservation International*, said: "In light of recent developments in Europe, our findings take on an even more worrying meaning. All *Aquila* eagles, like the Spanish Imperial Eagle, are opportunistic scavengers and therefore could be at risk of diclofenac poisoning. As we have seen in South Asia, wherever free-ranging livestock is treated with diclofenac, population declines in vultures and eagles can occur. The European Commission needs to recognise this problem and impose a continent-wide ban on veterinary diclofenac before it can impact on our birds."

Worryingly, it was announced in March that the drug had been authorised for manufacture and use in Italy and Spain and had been distributed to other European countries. Since then, a coalition of organisations including the Vulture Conservation Foundation, the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) and BirdLife have been campaigning for this decision to be reversed.

Ivan Ramirez, Head of European Conservation at BirdLife stated, "The findings strengthen the case for banning veterinary diclofenac across Europe and for the enforcement of bans in South Asia to stop the illegal misuse of human diclofenac to treat livestock."

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