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## Germany

**Post:** Berlin

### **FAS Berlin Helps Takins Find a New Home in San Diego Zoo**

**Report Categories:**

Export Accomplishments - Border Facilitation

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**Report Highlights:**

In June 2018, FAS Berlin received a request to facilitate the export of five takins – a “goat-antelope” from the eastern Himalayas – from Berlin’s zoo (Tierpark) to their new home at the San Diego Zoo. FAS Berlin worked with local officials and U.S. veterinarians from the USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to ensure the transit of these animals.

**General Information:**

In June 2018, FAS Berlin received a request to facilitate the export of five takins (*Bovidae budorcas*) from Berlin's zoo (Tierpark) to their new home at the San Diego Zoo, transit via the Frankfurt airport. Takins (rhymes with rockin') are large mammals from the eastern Himalayas often described as "goat-antelopes," having characteristics of both species. Also referred to as "goats with attitude," they are a bit Seussian- a body like a bison, nose like a moose, and horns like a wildebeest. Onsite visits to the Berlin zoo reveal the animals also have a strong odor, but are generally pretty cool. FAS Berlin worked with local officials and U.S. veterinarians from the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to ensure the transit of these animals.

<http://animals.sandiegozoo.org/animals/takin>

In discussion with APHIS and the Berlin Tierpark staff and veterinarians, a draft export health certificate was developed for the takin group being imported to the United States. APHIS already pre-approved this health certificate, and they asked FAS Berlin to confirm that the appropriate authorities in Germany would approve the certificate as well.

FAS Berlin initiated the process and worked closely with the German veterinary authorities on the national (Ministry of Agriculture, BMEL), federal (Hessian Ministry of Health), and local level (Berlin city veterinarian authorities), as well as at Berlin and Frankfurt Airports. Despite the complexity of multilateral certificate approval process, FAS Berlin was able to coordinate the health certificate approval from draft text to the final version, which was accepted by all parties involved. As a result, the export of takins took place as planned. To the best of our understanding, the takins are happy at their new Southern California home.

Here is the message FAS Berlin received after the Takin relocation was successfully completed:

*Dear colleagues,*

*it took over 20 passionate people who worked closely together and 77 days to move five takins (1.2 Golden takin, 1.0 Mishmi and 1.0 Sichuan takin) from Berlin to San Diego Zoo and the CCTU (USA). The animals arrived safely and are doing fine. And even if these international shipments with ungulates are complicated, it proofs[sic] that we are able to realize them...to realize them to keep our ex-situ populations (globally) genetically diverse as much as possible. It means concrete that the SSP for the Sichuan takin received with the imported male unrelated founders after over 20 years, the same for the population of Mishmi takin in the US. The transported trio of Golden takin are the first of their subspecies in the US ever and we hope our colleagues can establish an ex-situ population as insurance for the vulnerable species.*

*We would like to thank everyone who make this happen, who contributed to and supported this work!*

*Christian Kern*

*Kurator für Säugetiere / stellv. Zoologischer Leiter*

*Curator of Mammals / Deputy Zoological Director*

## BACKGROUND

Like the giant panda, the Sichuan takin is considered a national treasure and has the highest level of legal protection in China. India, Bhutan, and China all have laws prohibiting takin hunting, but despite their size and defenses, local people hunt takins regularly for their meat, both within and outside protected areas. In fact, human hunters cause most takin deaths. Such poaching is hard to control. Many local people are unaware of the conservation laws that are in place to protect these animals, and in many of these remote areas, there is no enforcement of the laws. Overhunting has resulted in the disappearance of takins in some areas of their range, and recovery is slow.

The San Diego Zoo's breeding program for takins has been extremely successful. The first Sichuan takin born outside of China was born here in 1989. In addition to Sichuan takins, the Zoo also had a breeding herd of Mishmi takins for many years, and the first Mishmi takin born in the New World was born here in 1993. Most takins now living at other zoos in North America came from San Diego.

FAS Berlin was happy to assist in this important conservation effort.



(Aren't they cuuuute?)

