

Tagging Rare Species



Visible Implant Elastomer (VIE) tags provide the solution for many researchers when an externally visible, but benign tag is needed. The tags are implanted beneath transparent or translucent tissue and remain externally visible. VIE is a biocompatible, medical-grade material that is injected into an animal as a liquid and then cures to a pliable solid. These tags have been successfully applied to many species of fish, cephalopods, crustaceans, reptiles, and amphibians and are often suitable for animals that are too small for other tagging methods.



Because it has little effect on the host, is highly visible, and can be used in small specimens, VIE is gaining widespread acceptance as a method for identifying endangered and rare species. VIE has been used with rare species to gather basic biological information about their life cycles (e.g. seahorses in Australia), habitat use (e.g. bullhead in Belgium, desert pupfish in the USA), growth rates (e.g. Colorado squawfish in the USA) and population sizes (e.g. tui chub in the USA). In restocking programs, VIE has been used to distinguish stocked animals from their naturally occurring counterparts (e.g. blue crab, boulder darters, pallid sturgeon, June suckers and Rio Grande silvery minnow in the USA; leopard frog in Canada) and to evaluate the success of supplementation hatchery programs (spring Chinook in the USA). Observations of tagged animals have given new insights into their behavior (e.g. seahorses in Australia).

June suckers, Northern leopard frogs (photo by K. Kendall), pallid sturgeon (photo by Jan Dean) and seahorses (photo by J. Clark-Jones, *Project Seahorse*) are examples of rare and endangered species that are monitored using VIE.



NMT is pleased to announce that Visible Implant Elastomer is now available in a new formula that is mixed in a 1:1 ratio. Because very small quantities can be mixed, it makes it more convenient and cost effective for projects where only a few animals are tagged at a time. NMT is proud to contribute to these programs. Please contact us if we can help with yours.

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