

STOC

新加坡中药团体联合委员会
Singapore TCM Organisations Committee



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PRESS RELEASE

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WIPING OUT THE TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES FOR TCM IN SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE, 1 March 2007- The Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (Acres) today announces the signing of a landmark Memorandum of Understanding between Acres and the Singapore TCM Organisations Committee (STOC) with regard to the launch of the "Acres & STOC Endangered Species-Friendly TCM Labelling Scheme". The scheme aims to end the trade in endangered species for TCM in Singapore.

The launch of this scheme follows a recent Acres undercover investigation into the illegal trade in bear products in Singapore for TCM, conducted from May until October 2006. **The investigation revealed a significant drop in the trade in bear products.** A total of 23 TCM shops (20.0% of shops surveyed) were found offering alleged bear products for sale to Acres investigators (recorded on video), compared to 50 shops (73.5% of shops surveyed) in a 2001 Acres survey.

Acres understands from the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) that products confiscated from 2 of the 23 shops were found to be genuine bear products. However, under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 2006 (ESA), it is also an offence to advertise bear products for sale even if the products turn out to not be genuine. As a result of the investigation, 6 shops were fined under the ESA and 17 shops were given warning letters.

"Following the recent investigation carried out by Acres, WSPA is very pleased to see that levels of trade have reduced in Singapore compared with previous findings. The level of co-operation the authorities have shown in response to the investigation is a credit to the AVA and an example to other countries struggling to cope with the global trade in bear parts." said Mr. Dave Eastham, Head of Wildlife, WSPA.

The continued trade creates a demand for bear products and fuels the exploitation of bears held in deplorable conditions on bear farms. The practice of farming bears for their bile is inhumane on the grounds that it severely and unavoidably compromises the physical and psychological health of bears.

It is also detrimental to wild populations of bears, especially in Asia. The reality is that, despite the presence of farmed bear bile, the gall from a wild bear is seen as more potent in TCM, and is worth considerably more. CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) Resolution Conf. 10.8 has stated that if CITES Parties and States not-party do not take action to eliminate such trade, poaching may cause declines of wild bears that could lead to the extirpation of certain populations or even species.

"We are delighted that trade levels have dropped so significantly. The launch of this scheme is an important step forward in our efforts to completely wipe out the trade in endangered species. It is very encouraging that, during this investigation, 1 shopkeeper recommended herbal alternatives instead of bear products. Indeed, there are over 50 herbal alternatives to bear bile and we look forward to working with STOC toward promoting these" said Ms. Charlene Tan, Acres Director of Investigations.

The labelling scheme aims to discourage the selling of endangered species for TCM. TCM shops committed to not selling endangered species products will receive the "Acres & STOC Endangered Species-Friendly TCM Label" to place at the entrance of the shop, advertising that no endangered species products are for sale. Acres urges the public to only patronise shops with this label.

"STOC and its members have been in support of the protection of endangered species. However, there still seems to have trading activities of endangered species product in the market. By participating in this labeling scheme, we can create more awareness of the need to protect endangered species among the traders as well as the general customers. This also reaffirms our commitment to the cause" said Mr. Lee Tiong Sa, Chairman of STOC.

Animals Asia Foundation's founder and CEO, Jill Robinson said: "We are delighted to fund this labelling scheme to educate consumers that by buying bear bile and other endangered animal products they are directly contributing to the suffering and demise of a range of species.

“Through our own campaign to end bear bile farming, we know that animal products can be replaced by herbal alternatives and that consumer education is vital to ensuring long-term change. The use of endangered animal products conflicts with the underlying ethos of traditional medicine, that healing should be in harmony with nature.”

TCM plays an important role in providing complementary health care to Singaporeans. It is part of a great historical tradition and the culture of many Chinese Singaporeans and must be preserved.

Acres will continue our efforts in monitoring the illegal trade in endangered species in Singapore and also in creating awareness about the cruelty and illegality of this trade.

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Notes to editors

- Under Section 4 of the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 2006, anyone who advertises for sale any bear product(s) contravenes the Act, even if the product turns out to be not authentic. By making a claim that the product is from bears, the dealer is potentially driving up the demand for bear products which directly contravenes the spirit of CITES and the local legislation meant to enforce CITES.
- Photos of bear farms and photos and videos of the undercover investigation are available on request.
- **Acres**
Acres is a local animal welfare charity aimed at fostering respect and compassion for all animals. The society is driven by its concern for animals and adopts research projects on the use of animals in various fields. Research findings are then used to educate the public to promote active community involvement in the animal welfare movement, as well as strive towards synergistic partnerships with authorities and related parties. Acres has been tackling the illegal wildlife trade since 2001 and has conducted more than 130 roadshows and/or talks to raise awareness on animal welfare issues in Singapore and to create a more socially responsible community. It currently has more than 3,000 individuals on its supporter database.
- **Animals Asia Foundation**
The Acres & STOC Endangered Species-Friendly TCM Labelling Scheme is funded by Animals Asia Foundation (AAF). AAF is a Hong Kong-based charity dedicated to ending cruelty and restoring respect for animals across Asia. In July 2000, AAF signed a landmark agreement with the Chinese authorities to rescue 500 suffering and endangered Moon Bears and work towards ending the barbaric practice of bear bile farming. To date, more than 215 previously farmed Moon Bears have been rescued and brought to AAF's sanctuary in Chengdu, Sichuan. Animals Asia is currently building a bear sanctuary in Vietnam.
- **STOC**
STOC comprises of the following members: the Singapore Chinese Medicines & Health Products Merchant Association, the Singapore Chinese Druggists Association, the Singapore Chinese Drug Importers & Exporters Guild, The Medicine Manufacturing Association of Singapore and the Singapore Chinese Medical Union. STOC aims to protect the common benefits and welfare in the Chinese medicine trade, jointly develop the Chinese Medicine trade and work closely with the authorities in the organizing, regulating, and upgrading of the Chinese Medicinal products sold in the market.
- **World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)**
The undercover investigation is funded by WSPA which is recognised by the United Nations and works to raise the standards of animal welfare throughout the world in partnership with more than 707 member societies in over 144 countries. Through its campaigns, education, training and animal rescue initiatives, WSPA seeks to ensure that the principles of animal welfare are universally understood and respected, and protected by effectively enforced legislation.