

singapore

## Fewer shops sell tiger parts, but online trade troubles ACRES



Tiger teeth used as part of a jewellery piece, said by some to be a lucky charm when worn. Photo: Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES)

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SINGAPORE — Over-the-counter sales of tiger parts might have gone down, but online trade involving such items has become a concern, said the Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES), as it revealed findings from a recent undercover investigation of tiger parts trade here.

During the society's undercover investigation, which took place between March and April this year, only four of the 153 jewellery and antique shops visited were found to be selling alleged tiger parts.

A similar ACRES investigation in 2010 found 59 out of 134 shops here offering alleged tiger parts for sale.

Tiger parts, such as teeth and claws, are sought after as they are thought to bring good luck to the bearer and serve as protection against evil.

At a media conference today (April 29), ACRES chief executive Louis Ng said the findings indicated that there was greater awareness of the issue among shop owners now. "The people that were selling tiger parts five years ago were fined, they were prosecuted and the awareness that was generated through the enforcement, and the investigation (in 2010) have resulted in this significant decline now," he said.

However, ACRES expressed concerns over the "brazen attitude" of the four shops alleged to have sold tiger parts, despite being aware of the situation. Three of the shops openly displayed tiger parts, while one produced the items upon request.

The findings were submitted to the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA), resulting in three of the errant shops being investigated and eight pieces of animal parts seized for forensic analysis to determine their authenticity, it said.

The AVA was unable to track down the fourth shop, a makeshift stall, despite visiting the site located in front of People's Park Complex in Chinatown twice.

Meanwhile, ACRES hopes to eventually bring the number of shops selling tiger parts to zero through community engagement, such as school talks and road shows. It will also continue its undercover operations to identify and nab errant traders, especially online dealers.

Mr Ng said: "I think one of our biggest worries now is that, while we wipe out the trades in shops to a very small percentage, this trade has moved to the online sphere, which makes it slightly difficult

to enforce." A brief online survey conducted by ACRES on Tuesday found over 14 online advertisements promoting tiger parts on that day itself, which the society described as troubling.

In response to TODAY's queries, an AVA spokesperson said the authority has been regularly monitoring traders' premises, retail outlets islandwide and online sources for sale of illegal wildlife, as well as their parts and products.

Anyone found possessing, selling, offering, advertising or displaying for sale any endangered species without a permit could be fined up to S\$50,000 per species and/or receive a two-year jail term.

The penalties also apply to netizens caught engaging in any of these acts, the spokesperson said.