AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ILLEGAL TRADE IN TIGER PARTS IN SINGAPORE





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by ACRES (ANIMAL CONCERNS RESEARCH AND EDUCATION SOCIETY)

Published by ACRES (Animal Concerns Research and Education Society) April 2015.

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- Improve the living conditions and welfare of animals in captivity.
- To educate people on lifestyle choices which do not involve the abuse of animals and which are environment-friendly.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1. Singapore has been recognised as playing a role in the trade of tiger products from neighbouring countries such as Indonesia, for both domestic trade and international re-exports¹.
- 2. To strengthen efforts to conserve populations of tigers and other Appendix I Asian big cat species and combat illegal trade in live specimens and parts and derivatives thereof, *Resolution Conf. 12.5* (*Rev. CoP15*): On Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix I Asian Big Cat species was adopted by the CITES Conference of the Parties. In the Resolution, it is stated that three subspecies of tiger, *Panthera tigris*, have become extinct within the last 50 years and noting with concern that, despite inclusion of Asian big cat species has escalated and further threatens their long-term survival in the wild.
- Under Singapore's Endangered Species (Import And Export) Act, 3. any person who has in his possession or under his control, or who sells, offers or exposes or advertises for sale, or displays to the public any scheduled species which has been imported or introduced from the sea in contravention of subsection (1) shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$50,000 for each such scheduled species (but not to exceed in the aggregate \$500,000) or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or to both. Under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) (Prohibition of Sale) Notification, the domestic sale of tiger specimens is prohibited. Any person who sells, offers or exposes for sale or displays to the public any tiger parts and products, commits an offence. The offender shall be liable to a fine not exceeding \$10,000 for each species (but not to exceed in the aggregate \$100,000) or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 1 year or to both.
- 4. Anyone who advertises for sale any tiger parts contravenes the above Act, even if the products turn out to be not authentic. By making a claim that the product is from tigers, the dealer is potentially driving up the demand for tiger parts which directly contravenes the spirit of CITES and the local legislation meant to enforce CITES.

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- 5. In 2003, ACRES, in collaboration with The New Paper, conducted undercover investigations into the illegal trade in tiger parts in Singapore. The investigations revealed that alleged tiger parts, including tiger bones, tiger paws and tiger penises, were on sale at Traditional Chinese Medicine stores in Chinatown.
- Between 2008 and 2009, ACRES received three tip-offs regarding the sale of alleged tiger parts in Singapore. ACRES investigations confirmed alleged tiger parts being sold as lucky charms in all three cases. Enforcement action by the Agri-food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) followed.
- 7. In 2010, ACRES conducted undercover investigations into the illegal trade in tiger parts in Singapore. The investigations revealed that alleged tiger parts, including tiger bones, tiger paws and tiger teeth were on sale at 59 jewellery outlets at Little India, Geylang, Ang Mo Kio, Bugis and Chinatown. At 52 shops, alleged tiger parts were openly on sale. 28 shopkeepers mentioned that an order for more tiger parts could be placed with them. Enforcement actions by the Agri-food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) followed where 26 shops were fined sums of between \$\$500 and \$\$3000 and 320 pieces of alleged tiger parts from 30 shops were also seized.
- 8. ACRES embarked on the 2015 investigation to determine the current levels of tiger parts trade in Singapore.160 jewellery and antique shops in Singapore were surveyed in Mar-Apr 2015.
- 9. At four shops, alleged tiger parts such as tiger claws, tiger teeth and tiger skin were offered for sale.
- 10. At three shops, the alleged tiger parts were openly on sale.
- 11. Out of the four shops, three shopkeepers recognised that tigers are protected animals and that it is illegal to sell tiger parts, and that tiger parts are customs- controlled items.
- 12. The alleged tiger parts were claimed to originate from Thailand, India, Malaysia and Siberia.
- 13. The investigation findings showed the presence of an illegal trade in alleged tiger parts in Singapore and that there is an immediate need for continued serious efforts to curb this illegal trade. There is a significant drop in percentage of shops selling alleged tiger parts from 44% to 2.5% now as compared to previous findings.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This report is based on an investigation into the illegal tiger parts trade in Singapore conducted by undercover investigators from ACRES (Animal Concerns Research and Education Society) between March 2015 and April 2015.

In 2003, ACRES, in collaboration with The New Paper, conducted undercover investigations into the illegal trade in tiger parts in Singapore. The investigations revealed that alleged tiger parts, including tiger bones, tiger paws and tiger penises were on sale at Traditional Chinese Medicine stores in Chinatown.

Three shops were found to be selling alleged tiger parts and video evidence was obtained in each case.

Between 2008 and 2009, ACRES received three tip-offs regarding the sale of alleged tiger parts in Singapore. ACRES investigations confirmed alleged tiger parts being sold as lucky charms in all three cases. Enforcement action by the Agri-food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) followed.

In 2010, ACRES conducted undercover investigations into the illegal trade in tiger parts in Singapore. The investigations revealed that alleged tiger parts, including tiger bones, tiger paws and tiger teeth were on sale at jewellery outlets at Little India, Geylang, Ang Mo Kio, Marina Parade, Bugis and Chinatown.

Five years had passed since the 2010 investigation by ACRES, and this 2015 investigation was undertaken to determine the current level of the illegal trade in tiger parts for the purpose of jewellery and lucky charms in Singapore.

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CHAPTER 2. TRADE IN TIGER PARTS

Tiger parts have been used for various purposes such as traditional medicine, jewellery, lucky charms and novelties in Asia¹.

Tiger parts, such as claws and teeth, are sold as jewellery, either as a raw piece or inlayed with gold or silver. The claws and teeth are also sold as lucky charms, as some people believe that they ward off evil and bring good luck and power (anon. trader Singapore pers. comm. to ACRES investigator, Dec 2008).

Pieces of tiger skin are also made into amulets as religious lucky charms believed to bring authority, power and protection to the person possessing the piece (anon. trader Singapore pers. comm. to ACRES investigator, Feb 2010).

In common with all instances of illegal wildlife trade, the trade in tiger parts greatly impacts wild populations, posing significant threats to the survival of these endangered species.

Wild tiger populations are at their lowest level ever in the past twenty years, with possibly as few as 3,200 individuals remaining in the wild².

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Raw tiger teeth for sale at a store at Golden Landmark.

Most tiger parts may be obtained from tigers poached from the wild in their habitat countries including Thailand, India, Siberia and Malaysia.

It is possible that some of the tiger parts on sale could be fake, either obtained from another animal or made of synthetic materials.

Although all commercial tiger trade has been banned since 1987 by CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), there has been an approximate fifty per cent decrease in wild tiger populations since the ban³.

Singapore has been recognised by TRAFFIC as playing a role in the trade of tiger products from neighbouring countries such as Indonesia, for both domestic trade and international re-exports¹.

In particular, it has been reported that tiger parts are smuggled in from Batam, Indonesia, to Singapore by boat and plane, and also by individuals carrying tiger skins in bags¹.

CHAPTER 3. CURRENT RESTRICTIONS ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE: CITES

CITES is an international agreement to ensure that trade does not threaten wildlife species with extinction.

The international trade in tigers and their parts is regulated by CITES, which Singapore is party to.

All six tiger species (Siberian, South China, Indo-Chinese, Sumatran, Malayan and Bengal tigers) are listed on Appendix I of CITES, meaning no commercial trade is allowed.

3.1. CITES Resolution Conf. 12.5 (revised CoP15): On Conservation of and trade in tigers and other - Appendix I Asian Big Cat species⁵

RECALLING Resolution Conf. 11.5, adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 11th meeting (Gigiri, 2000), relating to *Conservation of and trade in tigers;*

NOTING that wild populations of tigers and other Asian big cat species (snow leopard, *Uncia uncia*, clouded leopard, *Neofelis nebulosa*, all subspecies of leopard *Panthera pardus* within its Asian range, and Asiatic lion, *Panthera leo persica*) are threatened by the combined effects of poaching and habitat loss caused by disturbance, fragmentation and destruction; AWARE that all tigers and other Asian big cat species are included in Appendix I, and that commercial international trade in Asian big cat species and their parts and derivatives has been prohibited by the Convention since 1975 (with the exception of the Asiatic lion and the Amur tiger *Panthera tigris altaica*, which were included in 1977 and 1987, respectively);

Resolution Conf. 12.5 states "CONSCIOUS that three subspecies of tiger, *Panthera tigris,* have become extinct within the last 50 years and NOTING with concern that, despite inclusion of Asian big cat species in Appendix I, illegal trade in specimens of nearly all these species has escalated and further threatens their long-term survival in the wild;

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The Conference of the Parties to the Convention

URGES:

a) all Parties and non-Parties, especially range and consumer States of Asian big cat species, to adopt comprehensive legislation and enforcement controls which clearly define the administrative responsibilities of the various government agencies responsible for regulating trade within and outside of protected areas and in outlets for parts and derivatives, such as in wildlife markets and shops, etc., as a matter of urgency;

b) all Parties seeking to improve their legislation prohibiting international commercial trade in specimens of tiger and other Asian big cat species, and products labelled as, or claiming to contain, their parts and derivatives, to adopt such legislation, to include penalties adequate to

deter illegal trade and to consider introducing national measures to facilitate implementation of CITES, such as voluntarily prohibiting internal trade in such parts, derivatives and products, as provided for in Resolution Conf. 9.6 (Rev.);

c) all Parties, especially range and consumer States, to introduce innovative enforcement methods and, as a matter of priority, strengthen enforcement efforts in key border regions, and develop or improve implementation of regional enforcement networks;

d) all range States and other relevant Parties to implement systems for the recording of information relating to illegal trade in Asian big cats and to share this information as appropriate to ensure coordinated investigations and enforcement;

e) all range States shall seek to ensure enforcement units and personnel receive relevant and effective support in anti-poaching operations; the gathering and use of intelligence; targeting offenders; wildlife crime investigative techniques; collecting evidence; inter-agency liaison and cooperation; and preparing cases for prosecution; and in doing so may wish to consider the guidance provided at Annexes 1, 2 and 3, taking into account individual national circumstances;

f) Parties to contribute financial and technical assistance to enable range States to comply with the implementation of this Resolution and enhance capacity building, improvement of conservation measures and sustainable livelihoods, so as to contribute towards the conservation of Asian big cats;

g) those Parties and non-Parties in whose territory tigers and other Asian big cat species are bred in captivity to ensure that adequate management practices and controls are in place to prevent parts and derivatives from entering illegal trade from or through such facilities;

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h) those Parties and non-Parties in whose countries there exist stocks of parts and derivatives of tiger and other Asian big cat species (such as tiger bone stocks), but not including pre- Convention specimens, to consolidate and ensure adequate control of such stocks, and where

possible destroy the same, with the exception of those used for educational and scientific purposes;

i) range and non-range States of the tiger and other Asian big cat species to support and participate in international conservation programmes, such as the Global Tiger Forum, the Snow Leopard Network, the CITES Tiger Enforcement Task Force and the Global Tiger Initiative; and

j) all range and consumer States that are not party to CITES to accede to the Convention at the earliest possible date in order to improve control of international trade in parts and derivatives of tiger and other Asian big cat species;

INSTRUCTS the Secretariat to report to the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties on the status of Asian big cats in the wild, their conservation, and trade controls in place in Parties, using information provided by the range States on measures taken to comply with this Resolution and related relevant Decisions and any relevant additional information provided by relevant countries;

RECOMMENDS that:

a) the range States of the tiger and other Asian big cat species ensure that anti-poaching teams and enforcement units are established and effectively resourced to counter the illegal killing of and *Resolution Conf.* 12.5 (*Rev. CoP15*) – 2 trade in Asian big cat species, and that intelligence is shared between relevant enforcement agencies to counter illegal killing and trade;

b) range States of the tiger and other Asian big cat species carry out appropriate education and awareness campaigns directed at urban and rural communities and other targeted groups, on the ecological and cultural significance and the significance for ecotourism of Asian big cats, their prey and habitats;

c) all range and consumer States take measures to increase awareness of wildlife crime and illicit wildlife trade among their enforcement, prosecution and judicial authorities;

d) the enforcement agencies in range and consumer States of the tiger and other Asian big cat species establish cooperative bilateral and multilateral arrangements, especially for the management of shared wildlife species and protected habitats with common boundaries, in order to achieve more effective control of illegal international trade in specimens of Asian big cat species;

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e) Parties and non-Parties convene regional workshops on law enforcement needs associated with illegal cross-border movement of specimens of Asian big cat species, including the extent of the

trade, smuggling routes, methods and final consumer markets for live specimens and parts and derivatives, with technical assistance from the CITES Secretariat and, where available, financial support from interested governments and organizations; and

f) the range States of Asian big cat species conduct, where appropriate, studies to examine the motivation behind the illegal killing of these species and to recommend appropriate measures to address such motivation;

CHAPTER 4. THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK IN SINGAPORE

4.1. Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act

The Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act of Singapore is the national legislation that gives effect to CITES controls on import and export of wildlife and wildlife products.

The relevant section for the purpose of this investigation is:

Section 4 - Restriction on import, export, etc., of scheduled species

- (1) Any person who imports, exports, re-exports or introduces from the sea any scheduled species without a permit shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$50,000 for each such scheduled species (but not to exceed in the aggregate \$500,000) or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or to both.
- (2) Any person who has in his possession or under his control, or who sells, offers or exposes or advertises for sale, or displays to the public any scheduled species which has been imported or introduced from the sea in contravention of subsection (1) shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$50,000 for each such scheduled species (but not to exceed in the aggregate \$500,000) or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years or to both.
- (3) Any person who sells, offers or exposes or advertises for sale, or displays to the public such scheduled species as the Minister may, by notification in the Gazette, specify shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000 for each such scheduled species (but not to exceed in the aggregate \$100,000) or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both.

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All six species of tigers are listed in the Schedule.

The provisions of this Act can apply to products and derivatives as well.

It should be noted that anyone who advertises for sale any tiger parts contravenes this Act, even if the tiger parts turn out to be not authentic. By making a claim that the product is from tigers, the dealer is potentially driving up the demand for tiger parts which directly contravenes the spirit of CITES and the local legislation meant to enforce CITES.

Section 2 (Interpretation) of the Endangered Species (Import and export) Act 2014 defines "advertise" as follows:

"Advertise", in relation to a scheduled species, means to describe, make reference to or allude in any way, by any means or in any form, to that scheduled species —

- (a) whether directly or indirectly;
- (b) whether orally, in writing in any language, diagrammatically, pictorially, by the use of symbols or photographs, or in any combination thereof; and
- (c) whether by the common name or the scientific name of that scheduled species or otherwise;

Under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) (Prohibition of Sale) Notification, the domestic sale of tiger specimens is prohibited. Any person who sells, offers or exposes for sale or displays to the public any tiger parts and products, commits an offence. The offender shall be liable to a fine not exceeding \$10,000 for each species (but not to exceed in the aggregate \$100,000) or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 1 year or to both.

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CHAPTER 5. INVESTIGATION METHODOLOGY

5.1. Design

Six undercover investigators asked shopkeepers at jewellery and antique shops whether they had any tiger parts for sale.

5.2. Reliability

The study aimed to be scientifically reliable through the use of one standardised set of questions to guide the investigators in their interviews (Appendix I).

However, it was not always possible to ask all questions and sometimes it was possible to obtain more information, depending on how forthcoming with information the respondents were.

5.3. Sample

160 jewellery and antique shops were surveyed in locations where clusters of jewellery shops were situated. Shops which were surveyed in 2010 were included in this study. The individual shops were then surveyed opportunistically in each cluster location. The shops were located in the following seven clusters:

- Ang Mo Kio
- Bugis
- Chinatown
- · Beach road
- Little India
- Marine Parade
- Geylang

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5.4. Definitions and parameters

- 1. When the terms "tiger claw/s", "tiger nail/s", "tiger tooth/teeth" and "tiger skin" are referred to in this report, they are based on the claims of the shopkeepers and the parts were taken to be authentic. It was not within the scope of the study to verify the authenticity of the tiger parts.
- 2. When a shop is categorised as selling tiger parts, this refers to a shop whose shopkeeper(s) offered alleged tiger parts for sale.
- 3. The term "shopkeeper" is used to mean any person who served the investigators at the shop.

CHAPTER 6. RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

6.1. Alleged tiger parts on sale and prevalence

At four shops, alleged tiger parts were offered for sale (video evidence is available for all shops).

Of the four shops offering alleged tiger parts:

- Three shops openly displayed the tiger parts.
- Two shops offered tiger tooth/teeth only.
- One shop offered tiger claws only.
- One shop offered tiger claw and tooth/teeth only.

6.2. Number of pieces of alleged tiger parts on sale

Tiger part	No. of pieces
Tiger claws	5
Tiger teeth	4
Pieces of tiger skin	0

6.3. Claimed origin of alleged tiger parts on sale

Country	No. of shops
Thailand	1
India	2
Siberia	1
Malaysia	1

Some shops may have more than one country of origin.

6.4. Price range of alleged tiger parts (per finished piece)

Item description	Price range
Tiger claw not set in gold (carved or raw)	S\$38 - S\$150
Tiger tooth set in gold	S\$433 - S\$538
Tiger skin (pieces of varying size)	S\$118/piece
Tiger claw set in silver	S\$ 155 – S\$355

6.5. Description of alleged tiger claw set in gold pendant

The alleged tiger claws were set in gold with two claws facing away from each other. Occasionally there were single claws set in gold.

Usually they were adorned with coloured glass gem stones and frames made with gold/silver.

The claws varied in colour, some were dull cream coloured or dark brown colour. Some were slightly chipped, or had gaps on the sides of the claw. The shopkeeper informed us that the gap happens when the claw gets plucked out from the tiger.



Tiger teeth set in gold at a store at Little India

The claws were usually displayed in wall-mounted glass cabinets at

the back of the shop or in glass cabinets as a front display. They were visible to the investigators.

The claws found during the investigation came in various sizes, ranging from three centimetres to fifteen centimetres in length.

6.6. Description of alleged tiger tooth/teeth set in gold pendant

The alleged tiger teeth were set in gold/silver pendants in a similar design to the claws. There were a variety of sizes available.

The teeth were distinguished from claws by the shop keepers as being brighter white in colour. The teeth were set in gold in pairs facing away from each other and were adorned with coloured glass gem stones.

The tooth/teeth found during the investigation came in various sizes, ranging from three centimetres to ten centimetres in length.

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6.7. Products from other animals found on sale

- Dugong Teeth
- Elephant ivory (in the form of figurines)Unidentified animal tooth

The identification of these products is based on the claims of the shopkeepers.

CHAPTER 7. DISCUSSION

7.1. Overall

The fact that four shops offered tiger parts for sale in Singapore and that three shops openly displayed these alleged tiger parts, raises serious concerns.

This illegal trade clearly goes against the spirit of CITES. Recognising the demand for tiger parts and the declining wild populations,

CITES Resolution Conf. 12.5 recommends to carry out appropriate education and awareness campaigns to eliminate illegal trade in and use of Asian big cat skin as trophies, ornaments and items of clothing or for the production of other materials.

There is undoubtedly an urgent need to tighten our border controls to prevent the continued smuggling of these products into Singapore. There is also a need to prosecute traders and shopkeepers who continue to sell these products.

A deterrent sentence should be meted out to send a strong message that Singapore does not tolerate the illegal trading of tiger parts.

It should be noted that anyone who advertises for sale any tiger part(s) contravenes the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act, even if the product(s) turns out to be not authentic. By making a claim that the product is from tigers, the dealer is potentially driving up the demand for tiger parts which directly contravenes the spirit of CITES and the local legislation meant to enforce CITES.



Commented [AB1]: Noelle and Anbu to edit.

7.2. Changing Shopkeeper's Attitude

One shopkeeper revealed that it has been 3 years now that tiger parts cannot be sold due to government restrictions.

One shopkeeper stated that tiger tooth and claws cannot be sold because the Singapore government has banned the sale of such products. They go around the shops to check.

One shopkeeper stated: "Now no more already. Tiger tooth not allowed to sell in Singapore. They already banned it few years back. You know they came down to the shop, they take everything and go back".



Tiger teeth offered for sale by a shopkeeper.

One shopkeeper stated: "....This one all if you want to sell need permit. Most shopkeepers don't sell, in India is allowed, in Singapore don't have and not allowed. If you really want you have to bring in from India."

7.3. Ease of ordering and importing tiger parts

The apparent ease with which these products are being illegally imported into Singapore raises serious concerns.

No shops mentioned that an order for more tiger parts could be placed.

One of the shopkeepers mentioned to the investigator on 19th of March 2015 that one of the tiger tooth came in yesterday and the other last week. Stock was claimed to be from supplier. He also added that the investigator has to come back for it soon as it usually gets sold fast. Another piece similar to this would be difficult to come by. The shopkeeper was willing to reserve them for two days for the investigator.

Commented [AB2]: To be reworded by Noelle and Anbu.

7.4. Recognition of illegality of trade by shopkeepers and recognition of tigers as protected and endangered species

At least 152 shopkeepers recognised that it is illegal to sell tiger parts and that tiger parts are banned and items are controlled by the government.

One shopkeeper produced the alleged tiger parts from under the counter.

One shopkeeper said: "This is the tiger tooth small one and these are the tiger claws. I am genuine. When I say something I mean it". He also added that "Protected animal, cannot sell anymore. Before they use to sell. No more now".

One shopkeeper said: "No not every time have, this type is limited. I can't order for you. Limited design limited item. If you want to get this not so easy to get nowadays"

When asked why sales have been restricted some mentioned that it was because the tigers are protected animals.

Commented [AB3]: Exact number of shops through footage. Anbu and Noelle.

7.5. Awareness created by our past campaigns and seizures by AVA

Commented [AB4]: Noelle and Anbu

7.6. Countries of origin of tiger parts

The investigation revealed that Thailand, India, Malaysia and Siberia were reported by the shopkeepers to be the most common source of imported tiger parts.

One shopkeeper mentioned that tiger parts usually come from India and Siberia.

7.7. Claimed effects of using tiger parts

The shopkeepers claimed that the tiger claws and teeth can be carried or worn, either raw or fixed in gold, to bring authority and protection.

Another shopkeeper also stated that it helps to ward off evil spirit.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results from this 2015 investigation clearly highlight the presence of an illegal trade in alleged tiger parts in Singapore and that there is an immediate need for continued serious efforts to curb this illegal trade.

Even if the tiger parts turn out to be not authentic, by making a claim that the product is from tigers, the dealer is potentially driving up the demand for tiger parts which directly contravenes the spirit of CITES and the local legislation meant to enforce CITES.

ACRES will continue our efforts to monitor the illegal trade in tiger parts in Singapore and also in create awareness about the illegality of this trade and the threats to tigers.

The investigation has generated video evidence that can be used to build cases against these traders. Recognising that more orders could easily be made for these alleged tiger products, we urge the AVA to hand out severe sentences to deter future imports of tiger products and to tighten border controls to prevent the further illegal import of these products into Singapore.

We also urge the AVA to hand out severe sentences to anyone found selling or advertising tiger parts for sale.

Commented [AB5]: Edit by Noelle and Anbu

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- CITES CoP 15 Doc. 43.2 Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix I Asian big cat species: http://cites.org/eng/res/all/12/E12-05R15.pdf

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1. Do you have any product for good health/protection?
- 2. What is this product? Which animal is it from?
- 3. Is it real? How do you tell it is real?
- 4. How much is it?
- 5. Where do you get the product from?
- 6. How old is it?
- 7. Do you have more stock?
- 8. Will you be able to order more if we need other sizes?
- 9. Where else can we get besides your shop?