

## **New Wildlife Protection Law is passed – discussion of use of tiger bone in medicine**

Zhai Yong, Director of the NPC Natural Resources Law Drafting Office proposes that the biggest, most sensitive and most controversial issue surrounding the new law, namely the use of wildlife in medicine, should be considered properly from the perspective of treating patients. “Whether we can use the bones of dead tigers in medicine is an issue that society should discuss.”

[Reporter: Zhou Qijuan] The final decision has been made on the newly revised Wildlife Protection Law, revealing a new policy direction. On the afternoon of July 2, a closing ceremony was held for the 21st Meeting of the 12th National People’s Congress Standing Committee. With 152 fors, 1 against and 4 abstentions, the Meeting passed the new revision of the Wildlife Protection Law.

Shortly thereafter, the General Office of the NPC Standing Committee held a press conference to answer questions from society and the media. The issue that the outside world is most concerned about is still the utilisation of resources from captive-bred tigers and other wildlife.

After China signed CITES, in 1993 the State Council released the ‘Notification Regarding Prohibition of Trade in Rhino Horn and Tiger Bone’, reaffirming the prohibition of all trade in rhino horn and tiger bone. But there are now more than 6,000 tigers in captive facilities in China. At present there is no way to legally deal with the carcasses of these tigers after they have died naturally – they can only be frozen and sealed away. Black market prices for tiger bone are considerable, and China’s ban on tiger bone has consistently met with serious challenges. In recent years, the media and foreign wildlife conservation organisations have often revealed that China’s tiger breeding facilities and zoos have engaged in private sale of tiger bone products, attracting international attention and controversy.

Zhai Yong, Director of the NPC Natural Resources Law Drafting Office admits that the use of wildlife in medicine is currently a very controversial and sensitive topic.

Zhai quotes the conclusion of TCM research on the issue of whether tiger bone, rhino horn, antelope horn and bear bile may be used in medicine: “We have found that the use of substitute components that replace wildlife ingredients have led to a decline in efficacy and use of Chinese medicine.”

Zhai stated “We firmly oppose the rearing of tigers to eat, but society should further discuss the question of using the bones of tigers that have already died in medicine.”

In 1990, China launched research into artificial substitutes for tiger bone. After many years of spending human and physical resources, Zhai proposes that “The efficacy of tiger bone and bear bile in Chinese medicine is very useful – although some substitutes are used in other countries, which has earned us a lot of money, because using these substitutes in medicine earns us money from intellectual property, the efficacy of TCM has declined.”. Zhai even says that if all wildlife items are replaced in TCM, TCM could be useless – this issue required discussion among Chinese people.”

On this issue, Yan Xun, Chief Engineer of the Wildlife Conservation Department at the State Forestry Administration believes that captive-bred tigers and other wildlife are legal. "First of all, these captive-bred tigers, including their skins and bones, are legal property."

Zhai Yong issued a further policy message: "This is the biggest, most sensitive and most controversial issue relating to the newly revised Wildlife Protection Law, and in fact I think everyone should consider it properly from the perspective of treating patients."

Yan Xun also said that the next steps will be carried in accordance with new regulations relating to the newly issued Wildlife Protection Law and management of TCM products.

Zhou, Q. 2016. 新《野生动物保护法》通过 虎骨入药问题或讨论.  
<http://m.china.caixin.com/m/2016-07-03/100961514.html>