

Effectiveness of second phase of enforcement operation against animal smuggling “Pet Guardian” by Hong Kong Customs (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs mounted an operation against smuggling of animals codenamed "Pet Guardian" with the Mainland Customs since November 2023. As of today (April 5), Hong Kong Customs has detected two suspected cases of illegally importing animals in the second phase of the operation commenced in late March this year. A total of seven suspected illegally imported animals with a total of estimated market value of about \$210,000 were seized.

On March 24, Hong Kong Customs at Sha Tau Kok spotted a man carrying two handbags suspected of containing animals, who entered Hong Kong on a bike from the Mainland side of Chung Ying Street. Customs officers then took action and found four suspected illegally imported animals, including three kittens and one puppy, inside the man's bags. The 60-year-old man was subsequently arrested.

In the second case, Hong Kong Customs officers, acting on intelligence analysis, intercepted a 61-year-old woman who rode a bike to enter Hong Kong from Chung Ying Street of the Mainland side on March 26. Three suspected illegally imported kittens were found in the woman's handbag and she was immediately arrested.

Investigations of the two cases are ongoing and the seven animals have been handed over to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department for follow-up action.

Being a government department specifically responsible for tackling smuggling, Customs has all along been combating various smuggling activities at the forefront. Customs will keep up its enforcement action and continue to fiercely combat all types of smuggling activities through proactive risk management and intelligence-based enforcement strategies, along with mounting targeted anti-smuggling operations at suitable times to land a solid blow against relevant activities.

Customs reminds the public that importing animals into Hong Kong without a valid permit is an offence.

Under the Rabies Regulation, any person found guilty of illegally importing animals, carcasses or animal products is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for one year.

