

Government reminds public not to bring endangered species into Hong Kong or import regulated food illegally (with photos)

A Government spokesman today (February 1) reminded members of the public not to bring endangered species into Hong Kong without a required licence and not to import regulated food illegally when returning from visits to other places.

The spokesman said, "As some plant and animal species are facing the threat of extinction due to over-exploitation, the import and export of such species are regulated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, Cap. 586, is the local legislation that gives effect to CITES in Hong Kong. Under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, the import, export, re-export or possession of endangered animals and plants, including their parts and/or derivatives, is subject to control under a licensing system."

Any person who contravenes the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, even for non-commercial purposes, commits an offence and is liable to a maximum fine of \$10,000,000 and imprisonment for 10 years upon conviction with the specimens forfeited. More than 400 seizures were made in 2023. The specimens involved include American ginseng, orchids (including artificially propagated species such as moth orchid), gastrodia, dendrobium, dried seahorses, and scheduled shark species (including shark fins).

"As the Chinese New Year holidays are approaching, there have been a number of recent cases in which members of the public were intercepted for illegally bringing orchids from the Mainland back to Hong Kong. Members of the public should pay attention to whether the plant and animal products they intend to buy from places outside Hong Kong are endangered species. As it might not be easy to identify whether the wildlife products are originated from endangered species, members of the public are advised not to buy such items if they cannot ascertain whether the items are subject to control," the spokesman continued.

The Government is committed to the protection of endangered species. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and Hong Kong Customs will continue to work closely and step up their enforcement work in combatting the illegal trade in endangered species. For information on endangered species, please call 1823 or visit www.cites.hk.

Meanwhile, the spokesman further said that according to the Imported

Game, Meat, Poultry and Eggs Regulations (Cap. 132AK), any person who imports game, meat, poultry or eggs should produce a health certificate issued by an issuing entity from the place of origin or obtain prior permission in writing from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). Offenders are liable on conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment. Moreover, under the Import and Export Ordinance (Cap. 60), import licences issued by the FEHD are required for the import of frozen or chilled beef, mutton, pork and poultry.

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the FEHD has all along maintained close collaboration with the other law enforcement departments. Joint blitz operations are carried out at boundary control points where quarantine detector dogs are deployed to assist law enforcement officers in carrying out surveillance work to combat illegal food import. During the joint operations with Hong Kong Customs in 2023, the CFS instituted a total of 1 117 prosecutions involving inbound persons illegally bringing raw meat, poultry or eggs into Hong Kong, with respective fines of between \$150 and \$4,500 levied.

With the Lunar New Year holidays approaching, the CFS will step up the publicity of the relevant regulations to remind members of the public not to contravene the law.



