

While Supplies Last: The Sale of Tiger and Other Endangered Species Medicines in North America (1996–1997)

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Executive Summary

Rhinos and Tigers are among the most critically endangered large mammals in the world and are the focus of extensive global conservation efforts to halt their decline. Consumer demand for and trade in their parts and derivatives supply luxury markets as well as markets for cultural and medicinal needs. One of the most complex and far-reaching of these demands is for use in traditional medicines. Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) uses these animal derivatives to prepare medications in two forms--as individually prepared prescriptions and as over-the-counter medicines. Most of these latter medicines are labelled as having been manufactured in China and are sold in markets worldwide.

Conservationists have long debated the threat posed by the trade in medicines containing or claiming to contain protected and regulated species. But most believe, for the most part, that whether or not the medicines contain these species, the advertising and promotion of these products as containing these animal parts both maintains consumer demand and perpetuates the conservation problem. As such, they should be treated as if they contain these derivatives and their trade should be prohibited or regulated as dictated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Commercial trade of raw rhino horn and of Tiger or leopard bone and their derivative products is prohibited by international treaty (all are listed in Appendix I of CITES) as well as by domestic legislation in several countries, including China, Canada, and the United States. In Canada and the United States, the burden of proving that those products actually contain the species listed rests with the government. So although seizures at the port of entry occur when occasionally intercepted, few, if any, prosecutions have occurred of those dealing in these medicines because current forensic techniques are as yet unable to detect many of the derivatives in these products. As a result, the offer for sale of these undoubtedly illegally imported medicines in North American markets continues because of lack of a strong law enforcement deterrent and

presumably, a lack of consumer awareness. Conservationists believe that the ongoing availability of these products in North America constitutes a violation of CITES and of domestic legislation, is a threat to the species concerned, and should be stopped by wildlife law enforcement agencies.

TRAFFIC North America investigated the display and sale of endangered species products in two Canadian and five US cities beginning in late 1996 through fall of 1997. TRAFFIC focused on North American Chinatowns because of the concentration of shops that presumably sell those products and that these neighborhoods were visited by Chinese and non-Chinese alike. The TRAFFIC investigator posed as a customer but did not make any attempt to trick any shop owner into offering to sell a product that might not normally have been readily available in the shop.

TRAFFIC gathered information on offers to sell medicines that contain or claim to contain legally protected species – rhino *Rhinocerotidae spp.*, Tiger *Panthera tigris* and Leopard *P. pardus*. TRAFFIC also collected information on medicines that contain or claim to contain legally regulated species – Musk Deer *Moschus spp.* and bear *Ursidae spp.* Legally protected species are those that cannot be commercially imported into Canada and the United States for commercial purposes under CITES provisions. Legally regulated species are those that are governed by CITES and that generally may be imported with a permit from the country of origin or of re-export.

Of the 110 shops surveyed, 50 percent offered for sale one or more protected species medicines or medicines or products that contained or claimed to contain the target protected species – Tiger, rhinos and leopard. The medicines most commonly found offered for sale were those that contained or claimed to contain musk deer and Tiger parts and products. The least commonly found medicines were those containing or claiming to bear parts and products. At least 31 different types of rhino – or Tiger – containing medicines, produced by between 29 and 34 different manufacturers, were found offered for sale during the survey.

The cities with the greatest percentage of shops that offer for sale medicines containing presumably illegally imported protected species are in descending order: New York; Vancouver, Seattle, Toronto, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Los Angeles.

TRAFFIC concludes that:

- Protected species medicines are readily available in North America
- Protected species medicines are available because of legal inadequacies
- North America appears to be a significant market for these medicines
- Illegal stockpiles of these medicines may exist
- Public outreach must be initiated to eliminate these markets

TRAFFIC recommends that:

- Regional law enforcement needs to be increased
- Legislation to control internal trade needs to be strengthened
- Stockpiles and manufacturers have to be identified and inventoried
- Collaborative North American public outreach efforts is required
- Increased US Tiger and rhino funding allocations and distribution is essential