

August 31, 2010

Awareness Campaign mounts pressure on illegal bear farming operations in former Ha Tay

On August 26, the Mobile Education Unit of Education for Nature –Vietnam (ENV) carried out a Bear Protection event in Phuc Tho town (formerly Ha Tay), a town with a growing population about 30km north of Hanoi, and widely recognized as being as a hot spot for dozens of bear farms illegally and openly selling bear bile.

What is the attitude of local people toward use of bear bile?

ENV held a public event in the middle of the town market as part of an effort to reach as many people as possible in the area. Locals residents received information emphasizing the threats that Vietnam's two native bear species face resulting from the illegal consumption and trade of bear bile.

ENV Mobile Awareness team-members and volunteers handed out fact sheets, bear protection posters, and copies of ENV's latest publications; the *Ranger Bear* comic series and the spring issue of *Green Forest* nature magazine.

Many locals agreed that bear bile does not have any positive medicinal value in treating illnesses or medical conditions. Other local residents were unsure about relevant laws, stating that they believed bears kept on local farms were legal because they were registered and implanted with microchips by local authorities, and that exploitation of bear bile was allowed. ENV broadcast information about the protection of bears and relevant laws in relation to captive management and prohibited activities over the local public address system.



More than 10 signboards advertising bear farms can be seen along the town's main road.



Bears awaiting bear bile extraction at a bear farm in former Ha Tay province.



Above left: During the morning event, 160 people signed pledges agreeing not to use bear bile or bear products.

Above right: Children were very excited to learn more about bears at the event, which was the first of its kind held in the town.

Left: Ranger Bear comics obviously not just enjoyed by children!

Below left: Rows of cages line one bear farm openly engaged in selling bear bile.



Locals still know very little about the situation and do not fully understand problems related to bear farms, while many local bear farmers keep up-to-date with relevant laws. During the event, several bear farmers openly shared information with ENV about their bears and farming practices, and some farmers were apparently unaware that the selling and advertising of bear bile is illegal.

As part of ENV's ongoing campaign, letters were sent to bear farmers throughout the entire country highlighting important aspects of the law such as the ban on extracting, selling, or advertising the sale of bear bile. Farmers were also warned not to purchase new cubs or transfer bears to other farms and provinces without written authorization from the Forest Protection Department.

ENV has been working to end bear farming and trade by promoting public awareness aimed at reducing bear bile

consumption, actively working with law enforcement agencies and local authorities to enforce relevant laws prohibiting exploitation and trade of bears, while engaging decision makers at the central and provincial levels of government to help strengthen laws and policy in relation to protection of Vietnam's bears.

ENV's campaign, "End Bear Farming and Trade" is entering its sixth year and is conducted in partnership with the World Society for the Protection of Wildlife (WSPA), and in close cooperation with the Animals Asia Foundation, Free the Bears, and Wildlife at Risk.

For more information about ENV's efforts to protect Vietnam's bears, visit our website: <http://envietnam.org/our-work/end-bear-crime.html> or write us at ENVietnam@gmail.com



Selling fresh bear bile openly in violation of the law. The sign says " Fresh bear bile-
Ultrasound scan- Direct extraction"