

**AGRI-FOOD & VETERINARY AUTHORITY
AND
SINGAPORE CUSTOMS
JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**



Singapore authorities seized illegal ivory, rhinoceros horns and big cats' teeth
19 May 2015

Acting on a tip-off, the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA), with the support of Singapore Customs and the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority, has seized a shipment of about 3.7 tonnes of illegal ivory. This is the second largest seizure of illegal ivory since 2002. (See Annex A for background on previous cases.)

The shipment, which was declared as tea leaves, was shipped in two 20-footer containers from Kenya and was transiting through Singapore for Vietnam. Upon inspecting the two containers, AVA uncovered 1,783 pieces of raw ivory tusks (whole/cut) concealed among bags of tea dust. AVA also found four pieces of rhinoceros horns and 22 pieces of canine teeth believed to be from African big cats. The haul, estimated at S\$8 million, has been seized by AVA for further investigations.





1,783 pieces of raw ivory tusks, four pieces of rhinoceros horns, and 22 pieces of canine teeth believed to be from African big cats were concealed among bags of tea dust.

Under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), to which Singapore is a signatory, elephants, rhinoceros and big cats (for example, leopards and cheetahs) are endangered species. International trade in ivory, rhinoceros horns and certain species of big cats' teeth are banned under the Convention.

Under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act, a CITES permit is required for any import, export or re-export of CITES wildlife and their parts and products. The maximum penalty for the illegal wildlife is a fine of S\$50,000 per scheduled specimen (not exceeding an aggregate of S\$500,000) and/or imprisonment of up to two years. The same penalties apply to any transshipment of CITES specimens through Singapore without proper CITES permits from the exporting/importing country.

“The illegal trade of endangered animal parts is fuelled by increasing demand and poaching. Tackling the illegal wildlife trade requires concerted efforts by the

international community. The Singapore Government has zero tolerance on the use of Singapore as a conduit to smuggle endangered species and their parts and products. AVA will continue to cooperate and collaborate with partner enforcement agencies nationally and internationally to curb wildlife trafficking. The public can also help reduce demand by not buying such products”, said Ms Lye Fong Keng, Deputy Director of AVA’s Quarantine & Inspection Group, Wildlife Section.

Anyone with information on illegal wildlife trade can contact AVA on 68052992 or provide information through the AVA feedback form on AVA’s website (www.ava.gov.sg). All information provided to the AVA will be kept in strict confidence.

**Jointly released by the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority and
Singapore Customs**

Annex A

Information on previous cases of large ivory seizures

In June 2002, AVA seized a shipment of about six tonnes of raw ivory tusks and cut ivory pieces transiting through Singapore from Africa. The shipment of 532 raw ivory tusks and 40,810 ivory pieces were packed in six wooden crates labelled as "marble sculptures" and was estimated to be worth about S\$1.5 million. Following AVA's investigations, a local shipper was prosecuted and fined S\$5,000 for preparing the documents which facilitated the shipment. This was the maximum fine under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act then. The illegal ivory was repatriated to Africa for further investigations.

In January 2013, AVA and Singapore Customs intercepted a shipment of about 1.8 tonnes of illegal raw ivory tusks transiting through Singapore from Africa. The shipment of 1099 pieces of raw ivory tusks were packed in 65 gunny sacks and estimated to be worth S\$2.5 million. AVA's investigations concluded that no local importer was involved in the case. The illegal ivory was repatriated to Africa for further investigations.

In April 2014, AVA and Singapore Customs intercepted a shipment of illegal ivory, estimated to be worth S\$2 million. The shipment, which was declared as coffee berries, was transiting through Singapore from Africa in a 20-foot container and destined for another Asian country. A total of 106 pieces of illegal raw ivory tusks, weighing about one tonne, were recovered from 15 wooden crates. AVA's investigations concluded that no local importer was involved in the case. The shipping company involved was issued a warning for facilitating the transportation of the shipment. The illegal ivory was confiscated and remains in AVA's custody.