

The Facts & Fallacies of Tiger Farming

Some say we must “sell the tiger to save it.” In fact, if there is selling and buying, wild tigers will die. Selling the parts and products of tigers will accelerate the steep decline of Asia’s remaining wild tiger populations.

Tiger trade is prohibited internationally and also is banned domestically in many countries, including China – historically the largest market for tiger products. These bans have successfully shut down legal tiger trade and nearly extinguished demand. They must be reinforced, not undermined. Even limited legalization would rekindle demand and confuse consumers and law enforcement agencies alike about which products are legal and which are not.

It is critical to know the facts and fallacies surrounding proposals to farm tigers and sell their parts and products, such as tiger bone wine.

To save tigers, we must *not* sell them. There are simply too few wild tigers left to risk reopening trade of any kind.

FALLACY: Bans on tiger trade have not worked.

FACTS:

- Research shows China’s 14-year tiger trade ban has been an overwhelming success in reducing trade *and* demand.
- Bans on tiger trade have helped Russia’s tiger population recover and other wild tiger populations to persist.
- Without existing bans, wild tigers would be even worse off than they are today.
- Existing bans have been very effective, and they can be even more effective with stepped-up, intelligence-led enforcement.

FALLACY: Traditional tiger conservation methods have not worked.

FACTS:

- Traditional tiger conservation methods have worked when they have received adequate political and financial support.
- Protection of habitat and prey, coupled with anti-poaching efforts, has stabilized wild tiger populations in the Russian Far East and in parts of India.
- Wild tigers are far more likely to survive and thrive if they are well protected *in situ*.
- *In situ* conservation is *far* less costly per tiger than any *ex situ* scenario, and it protects entire ecosystems and species complexes.

FALLACY: Legalizing trade in farmed tiger products will decrease poaching of wild tigers.

FACTS:

- Legalizing trade runs the strong risk of increasing demand and poaching pressure.
- Legalizing trade in farmed products will expand opportunities to sell illegal tiger products, which can easily be mistaken for legal products.
- Illegal trade is often run by organized criminal networks, which will exploit loopholes opened by legalizing trade.
- Organized criminal networks will not give up illegal tiger trade just because farmed tiger products are available.
- Poaching of wild tigers will decrease *only* if trade bans are kept in place and enforced more effectively from forest to end-use market.

FALLACY: Tiger products are needed for human health and to preserve sacred cultural practices.

FACTS:

- Leaders of the traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) community say they no longer need or want tiger bone medicines.
- Alternatives to tiger products are plentiful, validated by scientific research studies sponsored by the Government of China and embraced by TCM practitioners.
- TCM industry leaders believe the use of tiger products will hurt TCM’s image and its global development.
- Leaders of ethnic communities that use tiger skins for traditional dress have asked their people to stop this use because it is not in line with their religious beliefs.
- Ethnic communities that once used tiger skins for dress are turning to silk brocade and other materials to replace tiger skin.

FALLACY: Tiger farming will satisfy all demand for tiger products at low prices.

FACTS:

- Tiger poaching is less expensive than tiger farming and, therefore, will bring higher profits.
- The cost of regulating trade in farmed tiger products would drive up their price, making the lower costs of poaching tigers even more attractive.
- Since wild tiger bone is believed to be more powerful, it will be favored over tiger bone from farms.
- Rekindling China's demand for tiger products in today's booming economy could quickly wipe out many wild tiger populations.

FALLACY: Legalizing trade in farmed tiger products will decrease demand for parts of wild tigers.

FACTS:

- Legalizing trade in farmed tiger products would *increase* demand for parts of wild tigers by rekindling the demand virtually eliminated by China's 1993 ban and by attracting new users.
- Since wild tiger bone is thought to be superior medicinally, connoisseurs will prefer it.
- Products from wild tigers cannot be distinguished from farmed products, so legalizing trade would provide a "cover" for illegal tiger products.
- Legalizing trade in farmed tiger products would increase overall trade volume and make stopping illegal tiger trade *far* more difficult.

FALLACY: Farmed tigers will one day be placed into the wild, ensuring the survival of wild tigers.

FACTS:

- Even if reintroduction were needed to save wild tigers, farmed tigers would be *unsuitable* for this purpose.
- Introducing captive-bred tigers into the wild would be extremely difficult, expensive and time-consuming.
- Wild tigers can be saved more effectively by protecting the habitat and prey of existing wild tiger populations and supporting strong anti-poaching efforts.
- Tiger farms breed for production rather than a healthy gene pool.
- Captive carnivores placed in the wild often lack a fear of humans, leading to their deaths or deaths of people.

FALLACY: Legalizing trade in products from tiger farms will boost local livelihoods.

FACTS:

- Tiger farms are financed by wealthy investors and have no connection to the rural communities that live alongside wild tiger populations.
- Legalizing trade in farmed tiger products would enhance only the livelihoods of already-wealthy farm investors and the criminal networks that would exploit legal loopholes.
- Legalizing tiger trade would increase poaching of tigers in countries such as India, further reducing wild tiger populations and significantly reducing visitor numbers and potential livelihoods for poor rural communities.

FALLACY: Allowing trade in tiger products is the sovereign right of any nation.

FACTS:

- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) prohibits international trade in tiger parts and products.
- CITES Resolution Conf. 12.5, adopted by consensus by nearly 160 countries, urges nations to prohibit domestic trade in tiger parts and products.
- Range countries with the largest wild tiger populations stand to lose the most from any legalization of tiger trade, making this an international issue.
- Any country that allows tiger trade will bear significant responsibility for loss of wild tigers due to poaching.



END TIGER TRADE ■ THE EYES OF THE WORLD ARE WATCHING

Aaranyak * American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine * Animal Welfare Institute *
Animals Asia Foundation * Association of Zoos & Aquariums * Born Free Foundation * Born Free USA *
British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums * Care for the Wild International * Conservation International *
Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine * David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation * Environmental Investigation Agency *
Global Tiger Patrol * Humane Society International * Humane Society of the United States * International Fund for Animal Welfare *
PeunPa * Ranthambhore Foundation * Save The Tiger Fund * Species Survival Network * The Corbett Foundation *
Tigris Foundation * TRAFFIC * 21st Century Tiger * WildAid * Wildlife Alliance *
Wildlife Conservation Nepal * Wildlife Conservation Society * Wildlife Protection Society of India * Wildlife Trust of India *
World Association of Zoos & Aquariums * World Society for the Protection of Animals * WWF * Zoological Society of London