



NUS student fined for mini wildlife zoo

A 26-YEAR-OLD student from the National University of Singapore (NUS) was fined \$5,600 last month for keeping 22 wild and endangered animals in his West Coast Drive flat.

Alvin Lok's mini zoo included 14 assorted snakes - seven boa constrictors, six pythons and one anaconda - which he kept in his toilet and bedroom.

He also reared four small mammals called sugar gliders, two alligator-snapping turtles, a star tortoise and a blue-tongued lizard in the kitchen.

In a statement yesterday, the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) said it acted on a tip-off and confiscated Lok's pets on Feb 20.

The animals were given to the zoo.

When questioned by AVA officers, Lok said his pets were bought from a shop selling aquarium supplies in Tanjong Pagar some years ago. The shop was prosecuted in 1996 for selling illegally imported baby pythons.

The snakes removed from Lok's flat were protected species under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, or Cites.

Anyone caught importing or exporting such animals without a permit can be fined up to \$5,000 per species and jailed for up to one year.

And for keeping wildlife without a licence, offenders can be charged under the Wild Animals and Birds Act and fined up to \$1,000 per animal.

Lok could not be reached for comment, but he told the AVA that he had collected the animals as a hobby and was not trading in them. However, he admitted he was aware that wildlife could not be kept as pets.

AVA's corporate communications manager, Mr Goh Shih Yong, said: 'Exotic pets require highly specialised care, diet, housing and maintenance that an average person cannot provide.'

He added: 'Wildlife may transmit diseases to animals or humans.'

Members of the public are advised to call the AVA on 6227-0670 if they have information on people keeping exotic pets.



The wild animals that Lok had included 14 snakes, which he kept in his toilet and bedroom.

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