



SEIZURE OF ILLEGAL EXOTIC PETS

In this festive season, the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) would like to remind the public that it is illegal to import, purchase and keep wild or exotic animals as pets in Singapore. AVA permits the import of dogs, cats, guinea pigs, chinchillas, hamsters, gerbils, rabbits, fish, red-eared sliders (terrapins) and birds (excluding critically endangered species) as pets and for sale as pets. These animals are suitable for Singapore's urban landscape, and able to fit a wide range of lifestyles.

2 On 20 Dec 2004, the AVA acted on a tip off from the Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES) that someone was keeping snakes, tarantulas and scorpions in a house. AVA officers raided a flat at Serangoon Ave 1 and found 11 heads of exotic animals. A 30-year old fruit stall assistant kept the animals. Last evening, AVA responded to another tip-off from a member of the public and investigated a 29-year old chef for allegedly keeping and trading an assortment of exotic pets in an Ang Mo Kio flat. AVA found 26 heads of animals including a slow loris and several reptiles. Please see **Annex A** for details. The animals were taken to the Singapore Zoological Gardens for care. Investigation is under way for the 2 cases and enforcement actions will be taken against the 2 owners.

3 Wild animals require professional handling and special housing. If wildlife, such as venomous snakes or primates, escape in Singapore's dense housing environment, there is a high chance that they may cause panic or danger to the public. Many of the exotic animals confiscated by AVA are species not found naturally in Singapore. If they escape, they may establish themselves in the wild and compete with or prey on the native wildlife, thereby endangering Singapore's delicate biodiversity. These animals may also carry diseases.

4 Many of these wild animals in the pet trade are also endangered species. Purchasing these animals would only fuel the illegal pet trade and drive the species closer to extinction. These illegally traded animals are usually smuggled under extremely poor conditions and mortality rate is high as a result of stress.

5 AVA does not grant permission for the import of wildlife as personal pets nor for sale as pets. Anyone who imports, or keeps wild animals without an AVA licence or permit will have the animals confiscated and may be liable for prosecution. Upon conviction, an offender can be fined or even jailed.

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6 The Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act empowers AVA to exert more effective control on the trade in endangered species. The Schedules to the Act list the CITES animal and plant species. Under the Act, it is an offence for anyone to import or export any scheduled species without a permit. Controls under the Act apply to zoological and bird parks, wildlife traders, pet bird and fish dealers, traditional medicine traders, museums, migrants, travellers, pet owners, scientific institutions and the general public. The maximum penalties include a fine of \$5,000 (or \$10,000 for repeated offences) and/or a jail term of up to 1 year. The Act provides for powers of entry, search and seizures for AVA officers to facilitate investigation and enforcement. AVA also enforces the Wild Animals and Birds Act (WABA) which prohibits the import, export and keeping of wildlife without a licence. A person can be prosecuted and fined \$1,000 per animal under WABA.

7 In the interest of public safety and animal welfare, AVA would like to remind the public not to import or purchase exotic pets as gifts as the demand would fuel the illegal wildlife trade. If anyone has information on anyone keeping and selling of exotic pets, please contact AVA at tel: 6227 0670.

Annex A

Animals Seized by AVA –

20 Dec (Case 1)	
CITES App II 1 Carpet python 1 Rainbow boa 1 Green tree python 1 Tarantula	Non-CITES 1 Bearded dragon 1 Leopard gecko 2 Scorpions 3 Tarantulas (unidentified)
21 Dec (Case 2)	
CITES App II 1 Slow loris 2 Green iguanas 2 Chameleons 2 Ball pythons 6 Star tortoises	Non-CITES 2 Alligator snapping turtles 4 Leopard geckos 4 Bearded dragons 1 Frilled necked lizard 1 Gecko (unidentified) 1 Scorpion

**Issued by Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority
Ministry of National Development
on 22 December 2004**

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