

China removes Itermagô from traditional medicine list Better protection

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Francoise Steynberg - China has removed the food magma from its traditional list of medicines (Chinese Pharmacopoeia) and also increased the legal protection of this most smuggled mammal in the world.

Prof. Morgan Hauptfleisch, head of the Biodiversity Research Center of the Namibia University of Science and Technology (Nust), says this is good news.

"Just last month, we established a national Itermagô working group to promote collaboration between scientists and anti-poaching units," Hauptfleisch told Republican on Monday.

The Namibian Chamber of the Environment (NCE) has confirmed the removal of Itermagô products from the Chinese traditional medicine list is a step in the right direction.

Itemagô's body parts such as the skin and scales achieve high prices on the black market. It is commonly used in Chinese traditional medicine, although scientists say it has no therapeutic value like rhino horn.

However, Itermagô parts are being removed from this official drug list this year, as well as bats compounded in pill form, the state-owned Health Times reported.

According to some scientists, the food magma is the possible host of the coronavirus (Covid-19) transmitted to humans in a traditional market in Wuhan, China, last year.

"Exhausted wildlife resources" are being withdrawn from the drug list, Health Times reported Tuesday, though the real reason for removing the food maggot is unclear.

SPECIAL PROTECTION

In addition, China's forestry authority has given the highest level of protection in the country on Friday for food maggots due to its threatened status.

According to China's wildlife protection laws, the country has two levels of wildlife protection under special state protection. Prior to the upgrade, Itermagos was under Class 2 state protection.

In recent months, China has banned the sale of wild animals as food because of the risk of spreading disease to humans, but trade in wildlife products remains legal for research and traditional medicine.

"Upgrading the level of protection of food maggots is a serious situation," Dr. Sun Quanhui, senior scientific adviser to the World Animal Protection Association in China, said.

"This means that all international trade in food magazines - living or dead and their products - is prohibited. At the same time, China's punishments will be stricter for wildlife crime," Sun said.

China issued a ban on the hunting of food maggots in 2007 and suspended all commercial imports of food maggots and their products since 2018.

In Namibia, poaching and smuggling continues to be a major challenge that appears weekly in the police wildlife crime report.

"Itermagô's in Namibia is stripped and smuggled at a frightening rate," says Itermagô researcher and master's student at Nust, Kelsey Preacher.

The possession and smuggling and trafficking of food maggots is a crime in Namibia.

Mr. Obert Sipilisa Sakutuka was arrested on Sunday in Katima Mulilo with a food belly in his possession.

In May, a man was found in Windhoek with an injured Ichermagô in his possession.

In March, Mr. Hega Nekare on Rundu is believed to have been trapped with 611 food maggots, one food maggot and five pieces of skin.

A reward is given to people who provide information that leads to the arrest and conviction of suspects who catch, kill or smuggle food. A reward is also given to people who provide information that leads to the seizure of food maggots, their body parts and products. - francoise@republikein.com.na