

China postpones lifting rhino, tiger parts ban

November 12 2018



Rhinos are hunted for their horns which are considered to bring health benefits, despite no scientific evidence

China appeared to backtrack on a controversial decision to lift a ban on trading tiger bones and rhinoceros horns, saying it has been postponed, state media reported Monday.

The State Council, China's cabinet, unexpectedly announced last month that it would allow the sale of rhino and [tiger](#) products under "special circumstances", a move conservationists likened to signing a death warrant for the endangered species.

Permitted uses included scientific research, sales of cultural relics, and "medical research or in healing".

But in an interview transcript published by the official Xinhua news agency, a senior State Council official said the new rules have been put on hold.

"The issuance of the detailed regulations for implementation has been postponed after study," said Executive Deputy Secretary-General Ding Xuedong.

"The 'three strict bans' will continue to be enforced," he added, referring to the trade, transport and use of rhino and tiger byproducts.

Ding said authorities will continue their crackdown on the illegal trade of rhino and tiger parts, vowing that illegal acts will be "dealt with severely".

China prohibited the trade of rhino horn and tiger bones in 1993 but a thriving transnational black market has since flourished.

Despite a lack of scientific evidence, demand for rhino horn and tiger bone is partly driven by their supposed health benefits, from curing cancer to boosting virility.

Rhino [horn](#) is made from keratin, the same substance that comprises hair and fingernails.

Southern white rhinos are "near threatened" but others such as black and Sumatran [rhinos](#) are critically endangered, according to the WWF.

Up to 6,000 captive tigers—twice the global wild population—are estimated to be in held in about 200 farms across China.

China has made efforts to crack down on the sale of illegal wildlife products, with a ban on [ivory](#) sales going into effect in December 2017—an attempt to rein in what used to be the product's largest market in the world.

A partial ban on ivory had already resulted in an 80 percent decline in ivory seizures entering China and a 65 percent drop in domestic prices for raw ivory, according to a report last year by Xinhua.

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