



Traditional Chinese Medicine & Tiger Bone

There are several misunderstandings about traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and the use of tiger bone. TCM has moved beyond tiger bone. Leaders of the TCM community have helped make China's 14-year ban on tiger bone trade a success, and many wish to see it stay in place – for the sake of TCM and wild tigers. The questions and answers below aim to set the record straight:

How long did TCM use tiger bone?

TCM used tiger bone in prescriptions for centuries, perhaps more than 1,500 years.

What ailments did TCM treat with tiger bone?

TCM used tiger bone primarily to treat pain and inflammation and to strengthen muscles, tendons and bones.

Why did TCM stop using tiger bone?

In 1993, the Chinese government banned the use of tiger bone, stopped the manufacturing of tiger bone medicines and removed tiger bone from its official list of approved medicines. This was done to help wild tiger populations that were hit hard by poaching to supply bones to China's market.

Why do most TCM practitioners support China's 14-year ban on trade in tiger bone?

TCM is based on maintaining the human body's natural balance. Likewise, TCM professionals today believe that TCM is obligated to contribute to maintaining the Earth's biological balance and diversity.

Is the TCM community asking the Chinese government to lift China's ban on trade in tiger products?

Mainstream TCM leaders are *not* requesting any reopening of trade in tiger bone from any source.

Why not?

Effective alternatives to tiger bone are widely available at reasonable costs. In May 2007, the prestigious, state-owned laboratories at Tanggula Pharmaceutical Company, which is supported by China's Northwest Institute of Biology and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, published results of 10 years of research showing that *sailong* (mole rat) bone "can completely substitute tiger bone for the effective treatment of rheumatism. Although sailong bone is smaller than tiger bone... its strength is obviously higher than tiger."

Many leaders of the TCM community believe the use of tiger bone is not in the best interests of TCM's reputation as it strives to become a respected global healthcare choice. They also wish to ensure that substitutes for tiger bone do not cause any other wild animal or plant species to become endangered.

If TCM practitioners no longer depend on tiger bone, who is requesting that tiger trade be reopened in China?

Pressure to reopen China's tiger bone trade comes from tiger farm investors who hope to capitalize on rekindling the Chinese public's demand for tiger bone wine as a health tonic. Health tonics are popular in China and often self-prescribed, much like vitamins and energy drinks in other countries. Tonics made with rare and expensive ingredients, such as parts of endangered species, are the most sought after.

What message does the TCM community wish to convey to CITES Parties at CoP14?

The TCM community urges CITES Parties to ask China to keep its ban on tiger bone trade in place and phase out tiger farming. Tiger trade bans *have* helped wild tigers, and alternatives to tiger bone are effective and plentiful. Why waste 14 years of progress by TCM, China and the world in reducing the market for tiger products?



Submitted by the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine (ACTCM)
on behalf of

ACTCM, the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine and the U.S. TCM community