

Tiger Experts Dismayed That Tiger Meat on Chinese Menu

Kathmandu – International conservation groups are calling on the Chinese government to open an immediate investigation into China’s largest tiger farm, after a Beijing-based news team reported it has proof that the farm’s restaurant serves tiger meat.

The request stems from a report by Independent Television News (ITN) on the results of DNA testing of a piece of tiger meat served to ITN staff in February at Xionsen Bear and Tiger Mountain Village near Guilin. After ITN aired a story about the farm’s tiger entree, the businessman who owns the farm denied the claim. The DNA was then tested by a laboratory in China.

“China should take immediate action to investigate this report. It’s outrageous and shocking to think that one of the world’s most endangered animals could be served as a trendy dinner right under the noses of Chinese authorities,” said Prasanna S. Yonzon of Wildlife Conservation Nepal. “It proves what we’ve said all along: tiger farms in China have nothing to do with conservation and everything to do with making money.”

The owner of the tiger farm serving the meat was a member of the Chinese government delegation to last week’s International Tiger Symposium in Kathmandu, Nepal. The delegation, led by State Forestry Administration officials, assured the meeting of government delegates and tiger experts that the burgeoning tiger farms in China were operating within the law.

“The tiger farms are business operations. It is not surprising that these businessmen breed tigers to sell their products. What is surprising is that the tiger farm owners are allowed to attend the meeting of this esteemed world body,” said Grace Ge Gabriel, Asia Regional Director for IFAW. “While all other participants are discussing ways to protect wild tigers, these tiger farm owners are openly promoting the trade of tiger parts. Their shameful actions are damaging China’s image the world over.”

More than 4,000 captive-bred tigers are housed on China’s tiger farms, several of which have breweries attached that make what they claim is “lion-bone” wine although it is sold in tiger-shaped bottles and openly promoted as containing tiger bone. The wealthy farm owners are putting pressure on China to lift its 14-year ban on trade in tiger products. Tiger experts believe this would only rekindle demand and open opportunities for criminals trading in products from tigers poached in the wild.

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Additional information: The International Tiger Coalition, an alliance of 30 organizations representing more than 100 organizations and millions of people worldwide, believes reinforcement of China’s 14-year internal ban on tiger trade is essential for securing a future for wild tigers.