

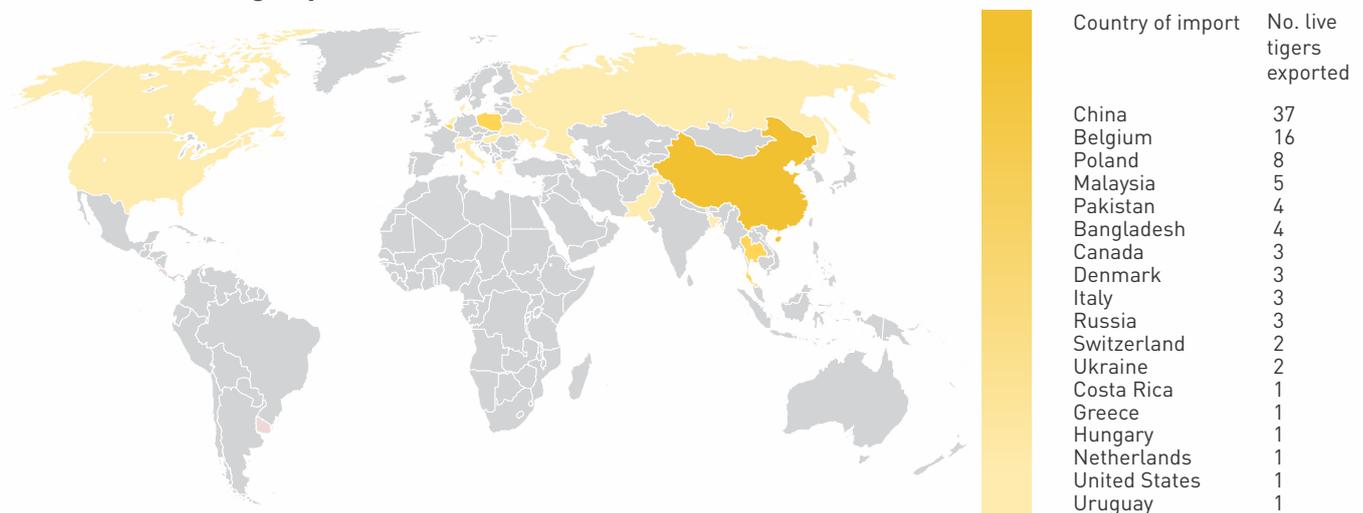
YEAR OF THE TIGER?

Big cat farming in South Africa: the need for international action.

South Africa is intensively breeding tigers and lions for a commercial trade in live animals and their body parts. There is also a significant commercial trade in leopard parts through hunting trophies and trade in live jaguars and their parts from captive sources. The trade is primarily to Asian countries where there is a strong demand for big cat parts to be used as luxury items or for traditional medicines. Countries such as China, Vietnam and Thailand are known hotspots for big cat farming and illegal trade, and a significant proportion of live animals and/or their parts that are bred in South Africa are traded to these countries. The lack of adequate and effective regulations for the keeping and breeding of all big cats in South Africa, and the existence of a legal lion bone trade, has allowed a partially regulated legal industry to flourish whilst also acting as a conduit for an illegal trade.



Destinations of tiger parts traded from South Africa between 2011 and 2020.



The situation in South Africa:

- Hundreds of private facilities in South Africa breed four of the big cat species (lion, tiger, leopard, jaguar) and in some cases cross breeds of these species for commercial purposes.
- The lack of effective controls on record-keeping and regulation and the level of overt breeding and commercial trade, has made it an impossible task to estimate the true number of animals.
- The legal lion breeding industry has made the illegal trafficking of big cat parts easier, as illegal parts can be mixed in with legal shipments. This has made the job of enforcement authorities extremely challenging in tackling illegal trafficking of big cats and their parts.

Existing international CITES agreements are simply not working in protecting big cats from commercial trade and subsequent poaching and trafficking.

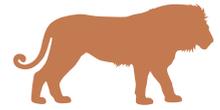
A SNAPSHOT OF BIG CAT TRADE FROM SOUTH AFRICA 2011 - 2020

TIGER (CITES Appendix I listed species)



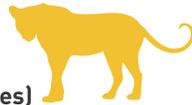
- 452 live tigers and tiger parts exported
- Including 359 live tigers and 93 tiger parts exported, of which, 54 were trophies
- 34 tiger items were exported specifically for commercial purposes
- Top importers of live tigers were Vietnam, China, and Thailand; all have high demand for tiger parts used in traditional medicine and luxury items.

LION (CITES Appendix II listed species)



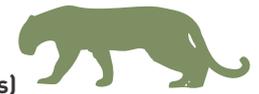
- 27,418 live African lion and lion parts exported
- Including 7,311 lion trophies, 7,196 skeletons, 1,949 live lions
- 557 live lions were exported to China, 160 to Thailand, and 108 to Vietnam.
- Many exports from captive-bred live e.g. 1,927 of the 1,949 live lions that were exported.
- Bone products, were exported in high quantities to Laos PDR and Vietnam: 2,218 bones exported to Laos PDR and 1,453 to Vietnam.

LEOPARD (CITES Appendix I listed species)



- 807 trophies, 374 skulls and 235 specimens exported
- 61 live leopard exported (48 of which were captive-bred individuals)
- A number of leopard items exported from captive-bred individuals.

JAGUAR (CITES Appendix I listed species)



- 3 trophies and 2 skins
- 33 live jaguars exported
- As jaguars are native to the Americas and non-indigenous to South Africa, all items and live animals should therefore originate from captive animals bred in South Africa.

Numerous commercial tiger breeding facilities exist across South Africa, where tigers and lions are bred together in small, inadequate enclosures. There are a number of serious welfare concerns related to the intensive keeping of big cats in these enclosures, including the transmission of zoonotic diseases.



Commercial tiger breeding facility in South Africa.

FOUR PAWS RECOMMENDATIONS

International

Short term

- Implement existing CITES Decisions and Resolutions for big cats as effective national policy and legislation.
- Identify 'facilities of concern' using existing guidelines, and transition towards facilities having adequate processes to protect animals from entering illegal trade.
- Commercial facilities breeding big cats transition away from commercial exploitation models and only breed and/or trade for strict conservation purposes.
- Urge the South African authorities to amend legislation to give protection to CITES Appendix I species and end the farming of big cats for commercial trade in live animals and body parts.

Long term

- Converge existing international trade agreements or develop new international trade agreements for big cats that include all five big cat species.

South Africa

- End the commercial breeding of all big cats and end the export and commercial trade in live animals and parts, including trophies and trade for personal purposes and trade from facilities which are clear commercial entities.
- Introduce a 'Grandfather Clause' where current owners keep the animals but stop all breeding and the animals live out their lives in as naturally as possible with their needs met.
- Increase detection and law enforcement efforts in respect of big cat parts smuggling at key entry and exit points within South Africa.
- Increase detection and law enforcement efforts in respect of killing and processing of big cats for traditional medicines at private facilities.
- Increase awareness amongst key stakeholders such as customs, police and other enforcement agencies, regarding the modus operandi of wildlife trafficking syndicates.

About FOUR PAWS

FOUR PAWS is the global animal welfare organisation for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them. Founded by Heli Dungler and friends in Vienna in 1988, the organisation focuses on companion animals including stray dogs and cats, farm animals and wild animals kept in inappropriate conditions as well as in disaster and conflict zones. With sustainable campaigns and projects, such as its own sanctuaries, FOUR PAWS provides rapid help and long-term protection for suffering animals.

www.four-paws.org.za

