

End Bear Bile Farming

The issue

More than 10,000 bears – mainly moon bears, but also sun bears and brown bears – are kept on bile farms in China, and around 1,200 in Vietnam. The bears subjected to regular bile extraction. The bile is used in traditional medicine.

Bile is extracted using various painful, invasive techniques, all of which cause massive infection in the bears. This cruel practice continues despite the availability of a large number of effective and affordable herbal and synthetic alternatives.

Most farmed bears are kept in tiny cages. In China, the cages are sometimes so small that the bears are unable to turn around or stand on all fours. Some bears are put into cages as cubs and never released. Bears may be kept caged like this for up to 30 years. Most farmed bears are starved, dehydrated and suffer from multiple diseases and malignant tumours that ultimately kill them.

Focus areas

Animals Asia's work to end bear bile farming focuses on five key areas:

1

Bear sanctuaries

We operate bear sanctuaries in China and Vietnam where bears are rehabilitated and cared for and where our bear teams gather vital evidence of the effects of bile extraction.

Our world-class bear rescue centres in Chengdu, China and Tam Dao, Vietnam provide the bears with comfortable dens and semi-natural enclosures where they are able to recover in safety and spend the remaining years of their lives in the company of other bears. To date, over 500 farmed bears have been received into our care.

During their rehabilitation at the rescue centres, the bears' behaviour and well-being are closely monitored by our bear teams through regular health checks and daily observations. This not only ensures that the bears receive the best care possible, but also enables our staff to gather vital scientific evidence on the physical and psychological effects of bile extraction. Reports and papers published by our teams have helped to raise the profile of the moon bear within the scientific community and to increase public awareness of the terrible cruelty involved in the bear bile farming industry.

Our sanctuaries also provide direct employment for over 200 Chinese and Vietnamese people in areas such as bear care, horticulture, food preparation and security. Several hundred local people are employed indirectly through services and construction.

2

Reducing demand

We engage with the traditional medicine community and other users of bile to promote herbal and synthetic alternatives and reduce demand.

Our Healing without Harm campaign targets practitioners of traditional medicine, independent pharmacists and pharmacy chains. We also work with pathologists and liver specialists in China and Vietnam to gather evidence on the implications for human health of consuming contaminated bile from diseased farm bears.

We regularly attend conferences to engage with doctors and encourage them to sign a pledge not to prescribe bear bile, and to advocate the alternatives. We also conduct surveys among doctors to determine attitudes to bear bile and find out how many have prescribed it in the past.

As much demand for bear bile comes from South Korea, we work with travel agencies and animal welfare groups to raise awareness among tourists that taking bear bile bought in Vietnam or China back to South Korea is illegal. In Vietnam we also work with law enforcement authorities at key tourist sites to inform visitors that it is illegal to pay for bile to be extracted at a bear farm.

3

The bile trade

We monitor the changing trends in the trade of bear bile and parts, keeping track of the producers, sellers and end consumers of bear products and working to maintain up-to-date intelligence on the location, size and workings of the bear bile industry.

We work with government authorities and conservation groups to track the sale of bile and bear parts within China and Vietnam and monitor the illegal export of these products.

Our field officers visit traditional medicine shops, pharmacies and hospitals in both countries, gathering vital information on the distribution of bear products and the fluctuations in demand and price. We work with local and national authorities to run awareness-raising campaigns on the existing laws on buying and exporting bear bile, and to encourage and assist with the enforcement of these laws.

We also fund research into the bile trade, as well as studies on its effects on the wild moon bear population in China



4

Public awareness

We run extensive public awareness campaigns in China and Vietnam to highlight the cruelty of the industry and build support for an end to bear bile farming. We run billboard advertising campaigns, and deliver presentations in community centres, schools and traditional medicine universities.

We engage with the media in China and Vietnam, as well as internationally, to ensure wide coverage of the cruelty of the bear bile industry – and committed celebrities help us to bring this message to the public. The internet and social media have become vital means of reaching the public, enabling us to galvanise support.

We also work with dozens of animal welfare groups and over 20 university student groups around China to help us bring the message to the public through street displays, photo exhibitions, plays, poster art and social media.

5

Government and policy

We engage with government authorities, public representatives and policy-makers in China, Vietnam and internationally to build support for an end to bear bile farming.

Our senior staff lobby political, business, legal and cultural leaders in Beijing and Hanoi, gathering support for the bears' cause. We also engage support from celebrities, scientific experts and other influential individuals.

We stay aware of the changing dynamics of China and Vietnam's political and policy-making environments. This is essential to ensure we pursue the best avenues for building a consensus towards an end to bear bile farming. Our work involves much behind-the-scenes activity to build relationships and establish dialogues with a variety of official departments, groups and individuals who can assist in bringing bear bile farming to an end.

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