



FROM FARM TO FREEDOM PEACE BY PIECE

## The Nanning Rescue Q&A

Updated April 14, 2014

### What's happening?

Animals Asia has been given the historic opportunity to take over a state-owned bear bile farm in Nanning, China, with around 130 bears, and turn it into a sanctuary and education centre. It will be the world's biggest bear rescue by a huge margin.

### How did this come about?

The farm was started as a bear breeding facility in 2004, when breeding bears were brought in. However, some of those bears may also have been bile extraction bears. The farm began extracting bile in 2008. In 2011, Mr Yan was appointed General Manager of the company that owns the farm. Bile extractions stopped at this time. Mr Yan contacted Animals Asia in 2013. He believed that bear farming was wrong and, rather than selling his bears to other farms, he felt that they deserved a better life at sanctuary in Chengdu.

### What is Mr Yan's view on the bear bile industry?

He has told Animals Asia he believes it is a cruel and hopeless industry that is best consigned to China's past. He also believes customers are turning away from bear bile products.

### What happens next?

All bears have been visually checked, and around 30 have been prioritised for transfer to our China Bear Rescue Centre in Chengdu for a full anaesthetic and health-check and to determine whether they need surgery. It is likely that these bears will remain at our Chengdu centre for the rest of their lives. It is also likely that a second transfer will take place following assessment of more of the bears. We have budgeted for the conversion of the Nanning site and three years' bear care. Working in cooperation with Mr Yan and all interested parties, the aim is to pursue a sustainable future for a sanctuary at Nanning that can act as a blueprint for bear bile farms and farmers across China. This means we can offer a solution to the problems faced by bear farmers wanting to close their farms or when the government commits to ending the industry.

### When does this happen?

The announcement will be made on April 15, 2014. The rescue will start in May. This is the very earliest we can commit to such a huge operation while ensuring that the logistics are in place to ensure its success.

### A "rescue" even though most of the bears will remain where they are?

Yes, the bears are being rescued from their present surroundings and their living conditions will be greatly improved.



## **And the world will be watching?**

Yes. The doors of the Nanning bear bile farm will be open to Chinese and international media during the rescue and conversion of the farm into a sanctuary. We will post daily updates online for our supporters and we will invite filmmakers and photographers to document the process. Working with complete transparency, we will share our daily challenges and successes via social media using platforms popular in the China and the West. We will also invite celebrity supporters to visit and share their own experiences.

## **Does Animals Asia have the finances to do this?**

We have a comprehensive plan in place to raise the funds needed from our global database, including corporates, foundations and trusts, so that this project will not affect our normal operations. However, this is a huge undertaking in terms of the bigger picture of caring for more bears into the future and working on the “solution” for ending bear farming. Fundraising is a critical component of our short and long-term plans.

## **Does Animals Asia have the manpower to do this?**

Yes, although the Nanning farm project will leave us stretched, the expertise and experience we offer is unrivalled in China. The changes to the farm and to the care of the bears will be carefully managed and prioritised. Recruitment of vets and bear staff has already started and a number of former staff and volunteers are returning to assist. From fundraising to bear care, this will require a huge team effort.

## **Why take on such a big project?**

- Because there are sick bears in pain who need assistance.
- Because we have repeatedly maintained that bear bile farms must close – so when we get the chance to do just that, we could not walk away.
- Because this demonstrates a genuine route to closing not just one, but potentially all bear bile farms – and demonstrates to the authorities that such a closure can benefit the bears, farmers and country alike.
- Because Animals Asia has always coupled awareness-raising with genuine action.
- Because we owe it to our supporters who have backed us from the outset.
- Because an undertaking of this size can inspire real change.
- Because it is the right thing to do



## **What is the breakdown of the bears at the farm?**

There are around 130 bears, including around 40 breeding females, some of whom have given birth to cubs. Several of the cubs have died and a full appraisal of the cub status will also occur during the rescue of the bears in May.

## **How many have suffered bile extractions?**

We believe that at least 21 adult bears have been used for bile extraction. In keeping with what Mr Yan has told us, extractions do appear to have ended around the time he became General Manager in 2011. Extraction wounds have healed, but the bears will still need major abdominal surgery to remove their damaged gall bladders. In recent years, the farm has been used as a breeding facility to supply bears to bile farms.

## **Where are the breeding bears kept?**

Currently there are around 50 breeding bears. The five males are now kept inside and let out into an outdoor enclosure one at a time. 10 bears have died from liver problems in the last year and four from fighting. The facility has no vet care.

The rest of the bears are housed in “bear sheds”, with adults in cages 2m high x 1.5m long x 1.5m wide. These cages were used for extraction purposes. Cubs are housed in small den areas next to the sheds.

### **What is the general health of the bears?**

Around 30 bears need urgent attention. Health issues include blindness, dental problems, untreated wounds and stereotypic behaviour (head swaying, pacing).

### **How will you prioritise the care of the sick bears?**

The sickest bears will be transported back to our Chengdu sanctuary for immediate vet care. They will be rehabilitated and eventually integrated with the rescued bears we currently care for.

### **Who actually owns the bear bile farm?**

The farm is part of the state-run Guan Xi Nanning Hua Hua Big World (Flower World) horticulture facility (HHBW).



### **Was the farm profitable?**

The farm was set up in 2004 with state funding, but it has not been profitable – a situation obviously not helped by Mr Yan's insistence, in recent years, that bears should not have bile extracted.

### **I'm still confused about the state owning a bear farm – can you explain?**

The company that started and owns the bear farm is owned by Nanning's Horticulture Department and conducts horticulture and landscape business for the department.

### **Animals Asia will be buying the bear bile farm?**

No. Animals Asia will take over responsibility for the bears and lease the land and the buildings where the bears are presently kept. Animals Asia will have the right to modify existing buildings and build new facilities.

### **Is this legally binding?**

Yes, there is a legally binding MOU supported by a more detailed legal agreement. The parties to the agreement are Animals Asia Foundation Ltd (Hong Kong) and the state-owned company that owns the bear farm.

### **How much is all this costing**

We have budgeted for a final figure of US\$5m, which includes transporting sick bears back to our sanctuary, renovating existing facilities and building necessary additional facilities as well as caring for the bears for the next three years.

### **How does this contribute towards Animals Asia's wider plan to end bear bile farming in China?**

The Nanning project gives us the opportunity to show how farms can be converted into sanctuaries. To date, even when farmers have wanted to leave the industry, most have sold bears back into the trade. This initiative offers another route.

### **Does this project help the government move towards an end to bear bile farming?**

Yes. With the growing demand from the Chinese people to end bear bile farming and with solutions presenting themselves from working with a Chinese farmer, we think future government decision-making will be easier. Our aim is to inspire.

## To inspire?

Yes, we feel that this could start a ripple effect for other farmers to consider similar solutions. While we cannot help them all directly, this initiative sends a message to senior government, wealthy philanthropists and those who have long wanted this industry to end that it can be done. We want people to step up – lawyers, teachers, doctors, journalists, pharmacists – whatever skills and experience people have, we want them to look at how they can put them to good use to end this industry.

