



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

Singapore stops 1.8 tonnes of illegal ivory from transshipment

Issued on 30 January 2013

The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) and the Singapore Customs worked together to intercept a shipment of about 1.8 tonnes of illegal raw ivory tusks transiting through Singapore from Africa. The shipment is the second largest ivory seizure since 2002 (Annex A) and AVA is working with local and international agencies to investigate this case.



The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority and Singapore Customs intercepted an illegal shipment of about 1.8 tonnes of raw ivory tusks smuggled from Africa. The estimated value of the shipment is about S\$2.5 million.

2 “Acting on a tip-off, AVA and Singapore Customs conducted a joint inspection on a shipment that was declared as ‘waste paper’ on 23 January. We found 1,099 pieces of raw ivory tusks packed in 65 gunny sacks,” Mr Gerald Neo, Executive Manager of AVA’s Quarantine & Inspection Department, said.

3 Under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), of which Singapore is a signatory to, all African and Asian elephants are endangered species. International trade in ivory has been banned under the Convention since 1989 (Annex B).

4 The maximum penalty for illegal trade (import, export and re-export) of ivory is a fine of S\$50,000 per scheduled specimen (not exceeding an aggregate of S\$500,000) and/or imprisonment of up to two years. The same penalties apply to any transshipment of ivory through Singapore without proper CITES permits from the exporting/importing country.

5 The Singapore government will not condone such illegal activities going through our country. AVA will continue to cooperate and collaborate with Singapore Customs and other national and international enforcement agencies to curb wildlife trafficking. Should anyone have information on illegal trade in ivory, they should contact AVA at 6325 7625 or ava_email@ava.gov.sg . All information shared with AVA will be kept in strict confidence.

**Jointly issued by the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority and Singapore Customs
On 30 January 2013**

Background info on the 2002 case

In June 2002, AVA seized a shipment of about 6 tonnes of raw ivory tusks and cut ivory pieces transiting through Singapore from Africa. The shipment of 532 raw ivory tusks and 40,810 ivory pieces were packed in six wooden crates, labelled as "marble sculptures" and was estimated to be worth about S\$1.5 million.

Following AVA's investigations, a local shipper was prosecuted and fined S\$5,000, which was the maximum fine under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act then, for preparing the documents which facilitated the shipment.

The illegal ivory was repatriated to Africa for further investigations.

AVA's role in regulating wildlife trade – Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement to ensure that trade does not threaten wildlife species with extinction. CITES classifies wildlife species under Appendices I, II or III depending on how endangered they are.

The import and export of CITES species is regulated through a worldwide system of permits, which Parties to CITES issue when conditions are met. Singapore is a Party to CITES and AVA is the designated CITES authority responsible for CITES implementation and enforcement in Singapore.

As part of our routine surveillance programme, AVA conducts regular, unannounced inspections on retail outlets island wide for illegal wildlife products, including elephant ivory or their products. AVA also inspects and monitors traders who have pre-Convention stocks of elephant ivory to verify their stock records. During our inspection visits, we also distribute advisories and brochures to educate retailers. When alerted, AVA would investigate any alleged trade of illegal wildlife.

Should the public have reliable information on illegal trade of elephant ivory and their products in Singapore, please contact AVA at 6325 7625 or ava_email@ava.gov.sg. All information provided would be kept strictly confidential.

Trade in CITES species: Elephant

Legislation

Under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act, all imports, exports and re-exports of elephants including their parts and products such as ivory, require CITES permits.

It is an offence for any person to possess, sell, offer or expose for sale, or display to the public any illegally imported scheduled species, whether real or purported to be real. Penalties include fines of up to \$50,000 per scheduled species (not exceeding an aggregate of \$500,000) and/or up to 2 years imprisonment.

CITES Classification

All Asian elephants and most African elephants (except elephants from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe) are CITES Appendix I species.

Trade

(import, export & re-export)

Trade in Appendix I species are generally prohibited.

Domestic trade	Domestic trade of elephant ivory is permitted in Singapore if traders can prove that the specimen is pre-Convention or was acquired before 1990 (i.e. before elephants became listed as protected species). CITES permits must also be obtained from AVA should anyone intend to import or re-export pre-Convention elephant ivory products as personal effects. The application must be supported by documentary proof of the legal acquisition of the specimens.
Volume (2002 – 2012)	seized About 41,400 pieces of elephant ivory products such as ivory pieces, tusks and carvings.
AVA's follow up action	Illegal wildlife parts/products seized may be repatriated to the country of origin for follow-up investigations, or sent to organisations for public education purposes or kept in AVA for reference or training of enforcement officers.