



November 1, 2018

To All Concerned with the Integrity of Natural Medicines:

The Chinese government recently lifted a 25-year ban on the use of products derived from endangered species in the practice of Chinese herbal medicine.¹ The American Society of Acupuncturists strongly opposes this reversal and advocates for the protection of endangered species in the United States and around the world. We wish to underscore that these substances are not in any way necessary for effective practice.

The American Chinese herbal practitioner community dissociates itself from any suggestion that our medicine endorses the endangerment of animals struggling for survival. The justification presented for this action is that use will be restricted to sourcing from farm-raised animals in the name of science, medicine, and “cultural exchanges.”¹ The likely risk, however, is that this shift will encourage poachers and the illegal trade of these species. There is no scientific, medical, nor cultural reason to use these products at all. We have sufficient medicines available now that can achieve whatever treatment results these endangered species might provide. Any compromise of protections for these animals is unconscionable and conflicts with principles widely held by those practicing Chinese medicine in North America. The ASA will oppose any trade of such products, and will support the prosecution of any practitioner found to be trafficking in them.

We are fortunate that, overwhelmingly, the professional American herbal industry is both responsible and socially conscious. Reputable suppliers would neither import nor sell these products, and we will work to assure that any products containing these ingredients are reported to the appropriate governmental agency for discipline. We will work to keep our practitioners and patients aware of this travesty, and will seek to make our professional environment such that trafficking in these substances leads to no gain. We believe that this change in China’s herbal policy should be seen as regressive and detrimental. We advocate for this action to be reversed. Chinese medical principles value life, and recognize the profundity of human interaction with our natural environment. The American Chinese medical community is chagrined at this new weakening of ethics. We share the concerns of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and other organizations that this will have a negative effect on efforts to protect these species. We echo as well the voice of the WWF, “to urgently call on China to not only maintain their 1993 ban on tiger bone and rhino horn trade, but to also extend it to cover trade in all tiger parts and products, regardless of whether they’re from captive-bred or wild animals.”²

The ASA endorses the American Herbal Product Association (AHPA): suppliers that ethically source materials according to Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

ASA promotes the use only of ethically and humanely treated, non-endangered animal products in Chinese Medicine, and urges all members of the Chinese medical community to do the same.

ASA supports a ban on the use of endangered species for Chinese medicine, such as Rhinoceros, Pangolin, and Tiger, and looks to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) for leadership in this issue.

We are always saddened when good policy is replaced with bad. Please know, we at the American Society of Acupuncturists strive for the creation and maintenance of a compassionate and ecologically responsible practice environment.

Sincerely,

The American Society of Acupuncturists

1. China to control trade in rhino and tiger products. State Council of the People's Republic of China. http://english.gov.cn/policies/latest_releases/2018/10/29/content_281476367121088.htm. Accessed November 1, 2018.

2. In a blow to wildlife, China lifts a ban on the use of tiger and rhino parts. World Wildlife Fund. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/in-a-blow-to-wildlife-china-lifts-a-ban-on-the-use-of-tiger-and-rhino-parts>. Accessed October 31, 2018.