

Online Head: China: clamp down on irregularities in wildlife trade ban

Curb irregularities in wildlife trade ban

METADATA Law Virology Diseases

In response to the deadly outbreak of coronavirus 2019-nCoV (see *Nature* <http://doi.org/dk47>; 2019), China has temporarily banned the sale of wildlife in markets, restaurants and online. Given that much of this trade is already illegal, stricter enforcement and prosecution measures are needed if the consumption of wild animals is to be brought under control. At present, prosecutions are obstructed because of inconsistencies in the naming of species (Z.-M. Zhou *Nature* 525, 187; 2015); online trading in low-profile illegal wildlife as pets is commonplace (Y.-C. Ye *et al. Conserv. Sci. Pract.* <http://doi.org/dk49>; 2019); and the public's desire for exotic wildlife products remains undiminished – particularly for use in traditional medicines. Dodging the law on such a scale is a disaster for global biodiversity and animal welfare, as well as for human health.

When, or if, wildlife trade is again permitted, it must be better scrutinized so that stringent hygiene and quarantine standards at markets can be enforced. Advertisements will need to include the scientific names of species as well as their provenance. Supplies from licensed captive breeders must be properly regulated and inspected – a step that would also help pin down violations of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

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