

Protect Vermont's Bears from the Bear Bile Trade

Vermont must halt the trade in bear gallbladders and bile and align its wildlife trafficking policies with more than 40 other states, including Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts in northern New England. Evidence reveals that wildlife traffickers are soliciting Vermont hunters and poachers for gallbladders, which are then sold into Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The traffickers may pay only \$50 or \$100 for a bladder, but then can sell it on the international market for 10 to 20 times as much. If it's wrong to kill rhinos for their horns for TCM, then it's wrong to kill bears for their gallbladders.

Why are Bears Killed for their Gallbladders?

Across the nation, bears and cubs are killed for their gallbladders as well as their paws and skulls. The gallbladders are easy to conceal and fetch a high price (exceeding \$1,000 per gallbladder) due to their use in TCM. The trade is centralized in China and South Korea, where bears are farmed for their bile in what amounts to a horror show — bears are kept in small cages for years with a tube inserted directly into their gallbladder to obtain bile until the bear eventually dies from infection and agony. Asian Bear populations have dwindled, and now American black bears are targeted due to the demand for bear bile. This trade incentivizes poaching activity — Vermont is not immune.

What is the Size of the Market for Bear Bile?

QY Research, a China-based market research firm, estimated in a 2022 report that the Chinese market

BEAR PARTS FOR SALE. Members of the Vermont Facebook group '802 Hunt Club' discuss a flyer offering to buy black bear body parts.



for bear bile powder was worth nearly \$62 million, making up for almost 97% of the global market — and its value is only expected to increase in the coming years. According to the report, China sold 44.68 tons of bear bile powder in 2021. With bear bile farms under rightful attack for the grossly inhumane treatment of captive bears, that puts even more pressure on wild bear populations.

Wildlife Traffickers are Threatening Bear Populations

Killing bears for their gallbladders has been linked to extensive, organized criminal activity, and due to the growing and unsustainable trade in bear gallbladders, bear populations are at risk globally. Poachers began targeting bears in the U.S., where the populations were still healthy. Starting in the late 1980s, hunters and park rangers in the U.S. began finding dead bears missing only gallbladders, leading to investigations that have uncovered evidence of large commercial organizations dealing in poaching and smuggling of bear parts. The gallbladders are sold in the U.S. and exported.

Questions? Contact Bob Galvin
at bgalvin@animalwellnessaction.org

