



Media release

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Tougher penalties for illegal trade in protected plants and animals

From 1 March 2022, tougher criminal sanctions will apply to the illegal trade in internationally protected animal and plant species. The Federal Council passed an amendment of the relevant federal act and implementing provisions on 26 January 2022. Serious cases of illegal trade will now be treated as crimes.

The CITES Convention regulates international trade in endangered species of wild plants and animals. Switzerland has been a Party to the Convention since 1975 and implements it via the Federal Act on the Trade in Endangered Animal and Plant Species (FA-CITES) and two ordinances. In future, illegal commercial or organised trade in internationally protected animal and plant species will constitute a crime carrying a potential prison sentence of up to five years. A crime is also committed if the illegal trade involves a large number of protected specimens. In addition, so-called “simple violations” of FA-CITES will be penalised more severely in future. The basic offence is now a misdemeanour punishable by a fine or up to a year’s imprisonment, and no longer simply an infraction resulting in a fine. These tighter measures are intended to provide better protection for animals and plants covered by CITES.

Duty to provide information on sale; import ban

A new duty to provide information has been introduced for persons who lawfully offer protected animals and plants for sale to the public. This means that such persons may no longer remain anonymous and must also provide information on the specimens offered. In addition, there is now an import ban on animal and plant species that are strictly protected by the legislation of another country, affected by international trade and demonstrably highly endangered. This will prevent such species from entering international trade via Switzerland.

Documentation requirements for breeders

Any person who breeds and trades in protected species must now prove the lawful origin of the plants or parent animals and document the entire stock. This will allow better monitoring of breeding within Switzerland and more effective prevention of the white-washing of illegally imported animals and plants.

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