



Ending bear bile farming in South Korea



Foreword

World Animal Protection has been protecting the world's bears for more than 20 years. We end the suffering and exploitation of bears in captivity and work to ensure wild bears stay in the wild, where they belong.

Bears are one of the world's most iconic wild animals. Yet tens of thousands throughout Asia endure extreme suffering during their lives so their gallbladder bile can be used in traditional medicine. The bear bile industry is one of the worst examples of wild animal exploitation and cruelty in the world today.

Bears kept in bile facilities are often forced to endure painful bile extraction. Many are kept in tiny cages in appalling conditions for their whole lives. All are denied their basic welfare needs. They are not free to roam in their natural environment or express any of their natural behaviour, as they would in the wild.

In South Korea the bear bile industry is not traditional. It began around 36 years ago with the first imports of bears for exploitation on farms. Unlike farmed bears in other countries, their bile is not regularly extracted. Bears are kept until they are at least 10 years old when they are slaughtered and their gallbladders are removed for traditional medicines. This is despite the readily available, cruelty-free bear bile alternatives that have been tested and endorsed by respected experts in the traditional medicine sector.

Working together

World Animal Protection and Green Korea United (GKU) have been working to end the South Korean bear bile industry since 2003. Together we have moved the people of South Korea to support an end to the industry and lobby for better protection for bears.

In 2014 we managed a landmark agreement between the government of South Korea and Bear Farmers Association of South Korea to develop a voluntary exit plan from the industry for bear farmers. This included a sterilisation programme, which involved encouraging bear farmers to have their captive bears sterilised, to stop the breeding of new bears for the industry.

The sterilisation of bears kept for their bile was completed in early 2017, and is a significant step forward in ending this cruel industry for good.

This success would not have been possible without the participation and support of multiple stakeholders. These include the South Korean government, the Ministry of Environment, GKU, the Bear Farmers' Association, technical experts, and the people of South Korea.

We would like to acknowledge all those who have been involved in reaching this milestone in ending the exploitation of bears in the bear bile industry. We will continue to work to ensure the best possible outcome for captive bears still suffering in bear farms, and in ending this industry for good.

We would like to thank GKU for their hard work in helping us move the world to protect animals.

We hope the pathway taken in South Korea will be an example that other Asian countries will follow to bring the cruel farming of bears for their bile to an end.

Kate Nustedt

Programme Director, Animals In The Wild
World Animal Protection

Joining forces for change

This report marks a significant milestone in the journey to end bear bile farming in South Korea and worldwide.

By 2017, over 1,000 farmed bears will have been sterilised by the South Korean government, moving towards an end to the country's 36-year-old bear bile industry.

It's an industry that since inception has attracted controversy and dissent. Frequent bear escapes and shooting accidents, inappropriate care and facilities, and bile extraction from live bears have captured both national and international media attention since 1981.

Thankfully the sterilisation work, combined with government controls, means no more bears will be introduced to South Korean bear farms, and the end of bear bile farming is in sight.

Our work has highlighted that such milestones become possible through collaboration, cooperation and persistence.

This was particularly apparent when bear farmers, government and veterinary officials, academics and NGOs joined in a public-private committee to address the problem, resulting in definitive actions being taken to rectify past policy allowing the farming of bears for bile.

Farmers raising bears for bile extraction agreed to the sterilisation initiative, and received incentives from the government in exchange. Throughout the programme veterinarians analysed and recorded the DNA of farmed bears, introducing the monitoring needed to prevent any illegal trade, trafficking, slaughter or breeding.

Joint action

This report covers 14 years of our dedicated efforts with World Animal Protection to end the bear bile farming industry in South Korea. It has involved intense public awareness and lobbying work, as well as investigative research into the conditions on farms and a census of the bears themselves.

We proposed and developed parliamentary bills with MPs to protect bears, including the Special Act for Farmed Bear Management. And, we extensively lobbied the South Korean National Assembly and IUCN's World Conservation Congress to end bear farming.

Green Korea United's team have been united and strong in their efforts to end the bear bile farming industry in South Korea. The international campaign, and support extended by World Animal Protection has been exemplary. Our partnership has delivered considerable achievements nationally and internationally.

I would like to offer my respect and applause to all staff from Green Korea United (GKU) and World Animal Protection involved in this campaign. You are amazing.

However, there is still work left to do to achieve a world where bears have their freedom and bear bile farming is no more. The achievements made in South Korea are a great stepping stone in accomplishing this.

Thank you very much.

Sang-hoon Yoon
Secretary-General, Green Korea United

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World Animal Protection is registered with the Charity Commission as a charity and with Companies House as a company limited by guarantee. World Animal Protection is governed by its Articles of Association.

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Company registration number 4029540
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Lasting change for bears

Thousands of bears have been held captive in bear bile facilities in a number of Asian countries, including South Korea, China, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar, since the 1980s. Their bile is turned into powders, capsules and ointments used in traditional medicines. Today, there are approximately 25,000 bears suffering in the bear bile industry across Asia.

Bear farming for bile or gallbladder extraction is legal in South Korea and China. Although Vietnam banned bile extraction in 2005, more than 1,000 bears are still captive there, and the illegal trade in bile and gall bladders continues.

Within South Korea it is still legal to raise bears in captivity and slaughter them at 10 years old for the sole purpose of the sale of bile and gallbladders. However, extracting bile from live bears is illegal.

South Korea was one of the first countries to exploit captive bears for their bile. In 1981, the government encouraged rural farmers to farm captive bears for export as an income source. However, export was banned from 1985 after intervention by animal welfare and protection organisations. But the breeding continued and over 1,400 were in captivity by the mid-2000s.

In 1999, bear farming-related legislation was enacted by the South Korean government. The Wildlife Protection and Hunting Act stipulated criteria for the management of captive bears over 24 years old. The Act allowed the slaughter and extraction of gallbladders from bears above this age for economic reasons. In 2005, the legal age limit for slaughtering bears for their gallbladder was reduced to 10 years old.

GKU has worked to end bear bile farming since the early 2000s: raising awareness, surveying the public, and monitoring the violation of laws such as the sale and advertising of illegal products. They have worked with the government to take action against such violations, and ran lobbying campaigns to pass a Special Act for Farmed Bear Management.

The formation of the Committee for Farmed Bear Management in 2010 (renamed the Bear Sterilisation Task Force Committee in 2014) was crucial in ending bear bile farming in South Korea. It comprised of the Bear Farmers Association, the Ministry of Environment, and other key stakeholders, including veterinarians, NGOs and academics. Its purpose was to collaborate and find solutions to end bear bile farming.

Thanks to the work of this task force, the government introduced the sterilisation programme in 2014 to ensure no new bears enter the bear bile farming industry. This programme was completed in 2017.

The conclusion of the sterilisation programme is a major step forward in ending the bear bile farming industry. This is the culmination of more than a decade's work, moving people, businesses, government and organisations to support the end of this programme.

However, while the agreement to sterilise bears is still voluntary and it remains legal to raise and slaughter bears for their bile, our work must continue. We will continue to lobby for lasting change for bears in South Korea.

We will ensure that the outcomes of the sterilisation programme are monitored and enforced, and the welfare of more than 700 sterilised bears in captivity on bile facilities is considered, while continuing to ensure no new bears end up in captivity for their bile.

Bear bile farming in South Korea

The bear bile farming industry in South Korea originated more than 35 years ago. During this time significant milestones have moved us closer to the eventual end of the industry.

1981: Importing, breeding and exporting bears is permitted in South Korea as an income generator for rural farmers. A total of 496 bears are imported between 1981 and 1985.

1985: Importing bears was completely banned under mounting public pressure, but bears were still allowed to be kept on farms. The government legalises gallbladder extraction from slaughtered bears, a solution to make up for the losses of bear owners.

1993: South Korea signs the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). This legally binding agreement ensures that the international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival, providing countries with a legal framework to ensure this.¹

1999: Jurisdiction over farmed bear management is transferred from the Korea Forest Service to the Ministry of Environment.

Management criteria for farmed bears of 24 years or older is introduced in the Wildlife Protection and Hunting Act. This allows bear farmers to slaughter bears for their gallbladders at the age of 24 or older.

2003: GKU, with World Animal Protection (then WSPA) support, investigates the conditions on bear bile farms in China and South Korea. Traditional medicine markets, online markets, and other aspects of the trade are also investigated.

2004: GKU publishes the results of the 2003 investigation: The Report on the Actual Conditions of Bear Bile Trade. The report highlights the illegal trade in bear bile and related products in South Korea and neighbouring countries. The findings are presented to the government.

2005: The Wildlife Protection Act is enacted and enforced. It replaces the Wildlife Protection and Hunting Act. This allows for more consistent monitoring of bear farms by the government.

The legal age limit on slaughtering bears for their gallbladder is reduced to 10 years of age, where the legal limit was previously 24 years. However, there are still no plans to end the industry.

The Ministry of Environment develops Guidelines for Farmed Bear Management. These guidelines allow for regular inspection of bear farms by regional Ministry of Environment offices.

GKU, with World Animal Protection support, commission and publish two surveys: Report on the National Public Survey into Bear Bile Farming and Bear Gallbladder, followed by the Report on the Traditional Medicine Doctor Survey into Bear Bile Farming and Bear Gallbladder. The first survey showed that 87.1% of Koreans were against bear farming for the purpose of bile extraction.

2007: A GKU survey of bear farmers shows that 80% agree with abolishing bear farming, and will cooperate with the government for reasonable compensation.

2009: GKU release the Report on the Alternative Medicine to Bear Bile, written by the Korea Association of Herbology. It is endorsed by the Association of Korean Medicine.

¹ What is CITES? Retrieved February 01, 2017, from <https://cites.org/eng/disc/what.php>

Bear bile farming in South Korea

2010: GKU release: Research on the Options to Abolish the Bear Farming Policy, conducted by Professor Gwangyu Lee of Kangwon National University.

GKU and MP Heedeok Hong press the government to introduce a Special Act for Farmed Bear Management. The Act features a breeding ban (sterilisation) with compensation to bear farmers, the purchase of farmed bears by the government and a management and handling plan for bears. It is not passed due to high budgetary requirements.

The Ministry of Environment forms a Farmed Bear Management Committee and calls for meetings to find a solution to bear bile farming issues.

2011: The survey Public Awareness and Perception on Bear Gall Bladder and Farmed Bears is commissioned by GKU, with World Animal Protection support, and shows 89.5% of surveyed South Koreans are against bear farming for the purpose of bile extraction, indicating continued strong public sentiment against the practice.

2012: The Ministry of Environment commissions Chungnam National University to conduct Research into the Actual Conditions of Farmed Bears and Management Options, and a census of farmed bears. The researchers find 53 bear farms, holding 998 captive bears, in South Korea.

The World Conservation Congress Assembly adopts a recommendation on farmed bears in Asia including South Korea. The motion (WCC-2012-Rec-139 - Bear farming in Asia, with particular reference to the conservation of wild populations) recognises South Korea is currently considering how to end bear bile farming, and is moving towards the end of farming. Furthermore, the recommendation encourages South Korea to continue its efforts to end bear farming.

2013: MP Hana Jang, from the then Democratic United Party, proposes the bill for Special Act for Farmed Bear Management. It is supported by 16 MPs.

World Animal Protection visits South Korea and releases an international statement to urge the government to end bear bile farming. A national budget is confirmed for the sterilisation programme of farmed bears. The budget is 5,570,000,000 KRW (approximately \$4,900,000 USD) over three years.

2014 – 2017: The Ministry of Environment conducts the sterilisation programme of farmed bears and develops a DNA database of bears, to monitor the industry.

A public poll on Consumer Demand for Bear Gall Bladder in South Korea is commissioned by GKU, with World Animal Protection support, and shows 86.3% of South Koreans disagree with breeding and slaughter of bears for their gallbladder.

Working partners

World Animal Protection and GKU joined forces in 2003 to end the South Korean bear bile farming industry.

World Animal Protection is a global animal protection organisation. For more than 50 years it has moved the world to protect animals in the wild, in communities, on farms and those caught up in disasters. It is committed to ending the cruel and unnecessary exploitation of bears for their bile and parts, to ensure bears are spared a lifetime suffering in captivity, and remain in the wild where they belong.

GKU was founded in 1991. It campaigns for the protection of wildlife and for the conservation of ecologically significant areas in South Korea, including the Baekdudaegan mountain range, the Demilitarized Zone, and seas and coastline. It also works for a nuclear free world and for measures to prevent climate change.

World Animal Protection provides expertise and technical and financial support to GKU to end the bear bile farming industry in South Korea. This includes advice on strategic direction, joint lobbying activities, and funding and support for surveys and activities to raise awareness in South Korea, as well as working with government, stakeholders and supporters around the world, to build international support to end the industry.

World Animal Protection and GKU will continue to work together to ensure a positive outcome for captive bears that are sterilised and remain on farms. Our successful campaign in South Korea will serve as an example to build momentum and encourage other countries in Asia to end the cruel bear bile industry.



Promoting alternatives to bear bile

The suffering of bears in the bear bile industry is not only cruel, but is entirely unnecessary, with viable synthetic and herbal alternatives readily available.

Dehydrated bear gall bladder and bear bile are commonly used in traditional medicines. They are believed by some traditional medicine practitioners to be effective in treating various diseases related to the liver, and to remove toxic substances by cooling down fevers.²

A 2005 survey: Korean Traditional Medicine Practitioners Poll on Farmed bears and Bear Gallbladders, commissioned by GKU and World Animal Protection, found that 93.3% of Korean traditional medicine practitioners believed that people simply take bear bile without prescription because of blind faith in its efficacy. The surveyed traditional medicine (TM) practitioners also indicated they had concerns about the safety and efficacy issues with using bear bile from farmed bears, with most Korean traditional medicine doctors having prescribed alternatives to bear bile.

During 2009, GKU commissioned the Korea Association of Herbology to carry out research into alternative medicines to bear bile. Highlights and findings of the Report on the Alternative Medicine to Bear Bile included:

- there are alternative medicines, including those synthesised from herbs, that are effective replacements for bear bile
- the Korea Association of Herbology strongly recommends choosing alternative medicines to bear bile.

Additionally, the Association of Korean Medicine supported the resulting research report. They stated there was enough clear evidence to end the practice of farming endangered species, including bears.

² Seung, J Y, *Ungok Herbalogy*, (Searimje, 2004), pp. 251-254

Herbology: Coedited by herbology professors of the nationwide oriental medicine universities, (Yeongrimsa, 2007), pp. 257-258



Raising public awareness and support

The support of local people has been paramount in building a movement towards ending bear bile farming in South Korea. Since 2005, a series of campaigns, events and activities have raised awareness, in turn reducing consumer demand and increasing support for ending the suffering of bears for their bile.

2005

Cage Dreams of Freedom event

In Seoul on National Bear Day, the Bears in the Cage Dreams of Freedom event demonstrated to the public the cruel and unnatural conditions suffered by moon bears on bear bile farms in South Korea. The Naksan Theatre Company of Hanseong University, performed a short play to show the realities of captive farmed bears on bear farms, while an exhibit demonstrated the experience of being caged. Petitions urging the government to end the bear bile farming industry in South Korea were signed, and members of the public were given a chance to write postcards to friends with the message “give farmed bears freedom!”

2006

Parade for bears

A National Bear Day parade in Seoul, using actors performing as bears, highlighted the cruelty endured by farmed bears. A total of 1,400 signatures were collected in a petition to end the industry. People were encouraged to send petition postcards to the Minister of Environment and government agencies calling for an end to bear bile farming.

2007

Sorry Bears concert

Musicians and television celebrities showed their support for ending bear bile farming at the Sorry Bears concert held at Konkuk University, Seoul. Guest artists, included: Sane Kang, Badaksori, Changgeun Park, Windy City, Jinkyu Ryu and Sangeun Lee. The aim of the concert was to raise public awareness of the plight of bears being taken from the wild.

2008

We Love Bears concert

We Love Bears at Central Park in Bundang featured pop-up stands and other activities to inspire people to say no to bear farming. Visitors were encouraged to write petition postcards to the Ministry of Environment. Exhibitions highlighted the plight of bears, and alternative medicines to bear bile. Local guest artists included: Girls Generation, Shiny, Crying Nut, Minwoo Lee, Geonmo Kim, Crown J & Inyeoung Seo, Booga Kings, Yeongeun Seo, Yeol Ryu, and Marionette.

Raising public awareness and support

2009

Luggage tags

Information on the bear bile industry was printed on luggage tags for Asiana Airlines, in collaboration with the travel magazine AB-Road. The information on the luggage tags explained that it is illegal to bring bear bile and bear by products into South Korea from abroad. It also encouraged passengers to sign a petition to end bear bile farming in South Korea.

Bus shelter advertisements

Across Seoul, 110 bus shelters displayed advertisements raising awareness on bear bile farming and calling for an end to the industry.

2010

Special exhibition at the National Assembly

A special exhibition was held at the National Assembly to support the bill for the Special Act for Farmed Bear Management. The Act highlighted solutions to ending the industry, including a breeding ban through sterilisation with compensation for, and the development of, a plan by the government for the purchase of all farmed bears and their subsequent management and handling.

2012

Raising awareness at World Conservation Congress

At the World Conservation Congress in Jeju, GKU activities focused on raising awareness on bear bile farming in South Korea. The Congress acknowledged South Korea's continued efforts towards ending bear farming, and the efforts of member countries to prevent the numbers of captive bears in existing farms increasing.

2013

Farmed bear rescue campaign

A campaign was launched focussing on Bodami the bear, a captive bear in South Korea, raising awareness and donations. The funds, with the support of donors, were used on advertisements in 70 bus and taxi shelters around Seoul to highlight the suffering of farmed bears being exploited for their bile.



Developing and supporting legislation

Three bills for special laws to end the bear bile farming industry were proposed by Members of Parliament at the National Assembly over the course of this campaign, including provision to end the breeding of farmed bears:

- Special Act for Farmed Bear Management (2010 and 2013)
- Special Act on Farmed Bear Breeding Ban, Preservation and Alteration in the Purpose of Use Thereof (2013).

GKU directly worked on drafting two of these bills with Members of Parliament who proposed the bills at the National Assembly. A legal solution, plus financial support, was essential in developing a practical solution to end the industry.

To achieve this GKU pressed for a special law to be introduced making bear bile farming illegal. The law would prohibit breeding of farmed bears and include an option for the government to purchase and manage captive bears on bear farms.

GKU developed the draft bill for the Special Act for Farmed Bear Management 2010, with MP Heedeok Hong. The bill included a ban on breeding of farmed bears, through a sterilisation programme, compensation for bear farmers, and government purchase and management of all captive farmed bears. The bill also included a ban on using bears for other purposes, such as for exhibition, and transferring them between farms.

The Ministry of Environment did not pass the bill due to the significant budget needed to purchase all of the bears. It ordered a census of all farmed bears to be conducted first.

Next steps

In 2013 two separate bills on a Special Act for Farmed Bear Management were proposed again. Both bills focussed on ending bear bile farming, but presented two different options to reach this outcome.

MP Hana Jang's bill amended the earlier bill proposed by MP Heedeok Hong. This bill included the ban on breeding and the purchase and management of bears on the farms by the government.

MP Bonghong Choi presented a bill which also required the government to purchase bears on farms, but with the condition that only bears with conservation value would be purchased. It was felt that this would address the budgetary limitations. However, while this bill lessened the government's financial burden it still left a number of bears suffering on farms, delaying the end of the bear bile farming industry.

Although it was expected the bills would be passed they were unsuccessful. This was due to an inability to reach an agreement on key aspects, including budget requirements. There was also a perception that the government was taking responsibility for private property - the bears.

A full list of MPs who supported and agreed on the special bill is provided in Appendices 3.

Forming a public-private committee

The critical turning point in the campaign to end bear bile farming was the formation of a public-private committee in 2010.

This was formed after the proposal for the bill on Special Act for Farmed Bear Management, and provided an open forum for stakeholders, including the Bear Farmers Association, the Ministry of Environment, and experts from veterinary, government and academic fields, to facilitate discussion on specific laws.

During committee discussions, the government conceded some responsibility for the introduction of the bear bile industry in South Korea. It also agreed to conduct an official investigation to inform future options to move towards solutions to end the industry.

In 2012, the Ministry of Environment undertook research, titled Research into the Actual Conditions of Farmed Bears and their Management Options. This was the first census undertaken of farmed bears and bear farms in South Korea, providing critical and precise statistics on the industry.

Management options

The results formed the basis for discussions on farmed bear management and suggested options to find a solution to end the industry:

- A. Introduction of a breeding ban and reducing the bear population over time.
- B. Introduction of a breeding ban and a phased purchase of bears based on the age of bears.
- C. Purchasing land to provide facilities and accommodation for all the bears, then purchasing all bears from bear farms to move to this land, with subsequent management of the bears handled by national government.
- D. a) The government purchasing older bears and bears in ill health (100 in total) from bear farms and donating these for academic purposes (including genetic study). These bears would be housed in national or public institutes with appropriate spaces and land. Institutes named included the National Science Museum, museums of natural history or universities with departments of veterinary medicine/ animal resources.

b) The government purchasing or transferring 200 bears in good health and condition (for treatment if necessary) for release on appropriate land that would be run as a bear park. Interested local governments would run this bear park.



Forming a public-private committee

E. Suggestion from bear farmers on the premise of a breeding ban (two separate options within)

a) Reduce the age for slaughter of bears for their bile to five years old, and provide the bear farmers with compensation for each bear sterilised. Resulting in all bears aged five or older being sterilised. Additionally, the government would pay for the cost of feed for bears aged between one and four years of age.

b) The government would provide the cost of feed for bears aged between one and 10 years, with the minimum age of slaughter remaining at 10 years. All bears aged 10 or older would be sterilised, and when these bears were slaughtered, the government would provide bear farmers with financial aid.

F. Establishing a foundation to manage a bear sanctuary (with land and facilities provided by the government).

The option in which the government purchased and managed all the farmed bears fulfilled the objective of ending bear bile farming. It also fed into growing national support for the end of the bear farming industry. Bear farmers also supported this as their preferred option. This option allowed for the eradication of the bear bile farming industry in the most effective and speedy manner, with the government taking control of the issue and the solution.

However, after discussions with relevant ministries, the government expressed the opinion that “it was not appropriate for the state to compensate for the value of private property as bear farming is a profit-making business”.

Consequently, the government chose the option of a breeding ban through a sterilisation programme, rather than purchase of all bears. It was not the quickest resolution, but it was the first time resources and budget were allocated to a concrete solution that would result in ending bear bile farming.

The long-term rationale of the sterilisation programme was to ensure no new bears will enter the industry through breeding. It is also anticipated that law enforcement will be stringent and no new bears will enter the bile industry in South Korea through importation.

The combination of lobbying and legislative work, support from members of parliament, increased public awareness and a growing national sentiment against the industry, including reduced consumer demand for bear bile, were all essential components towards creating momentum for this programme to be accepted by all major stakeholders.

Sterilising farmed bears

The sterilisation programme commenced in 2014, with all bile bears sterilised by the end of 2016.

The Ministry of Environment allocated a total budget of 5,570,000,000 KRW (approximately \$4,900,000 USD) for the programme. The programme was implemented by South Korea's Ministry of Environment.

The public-private committee was renamed the Bear Sterilisation Task Force Committee in 2014, and oversaw the sterilisation programme. It ensured all stakeholders were updated on developments, and given the opportunity to make comment if necessary. Such involvement ensured that any emerging issues were identified and addressed as soon as possible.

The Ministry of Environment conducted the sterilisation programme. A total of 967 bears were sterilised by 2017: 389 bears were sterilised in 2014; 557 in 2015 and 21 in 2016.

The government also built a DNA database of farmed bears. At the time of sterilisation, the DNA of each bear was collected, analysed and registered on the database. Birth date, alteration in the purpose of use, transfer, acquisition, deaths, etc. of farmed bears are recorded. Recording the DNA of each bear allows clear monitoring to prevent any illegal trade, trafficking, slaughter or breeding.

With all farmed bears now sterilised, the sterilisation programme will ultimately end the captive breeding of bears for bile. It ensures the bears confined in facilities in South Korea will be the last ones to suffer in captivity for their bile – while no new bears will enter the industry.

The sterilisation programme is a highly significant turning point and milestone in the history of bear bile farming.

But, the agreement is still voluntary, and it remains legal to raise and slaughter bears for their bile. This means we must continue to lobby for lasting change for bears in South Korea. We will ensure that the outcomes of the sterilisation programme are monitored and enforced, and that the government keeps its commitment to not allow bears to be converted back for use for their bile, ensuring that no new bears end up in suffering in captivity for their bile.



Moving forward together

Although sterilisation has been completed, as of March 2017, over 700 bears will remain in their cages until they are slaughtered for their gallbladders.

To date, there are no plans for the management of farmed bears once the sterilisation programme is completed. While the completion of the sterilisation programme is extremely positive, the government needs to develop a management plan for the remaining captive bears.

It is also still legal to slaughter farmed bears for their gall bladder once they have reached 10 years or older. The government plans to ban bear bile farming in 2024, when those bears born in 2015 reach 10 years of age. This is based on the premise that all the bears will be slaughtered when they reach the age of 10.

However, there are currently bears over the age of 10 years old still suffering in cages, due to the decrease in demand for bear bile. Knowing that the demand for bear bile will continue to gradually decrease, it is feared that this situation will worsen for these bears over time.

Furthermore, a reduction in bear bile demand will increase the financial burden on bear farmers. It could prevent investment in, or improvement of, bear farming facilities by these farmers. It is more than 30 years since bears were first imported into South Korea, and facilities on bear farms are outdated and in poor condition.

If the conditions on farms continue to deteriorate, there is the risk of accidents, such as bears escaping from cages, and bears enduring worse living conditions. The government must now consistently and meticulously monitor bear farms, and consider budgetary investments to improve the conditions to ensure the best welfare conditions for the bears.

Converting farmed bears to exhibition bears

The current situation has given rise to former bear bile bears now being used to entertain the public. Since 2013 a total of 92 bears initially registered by bear owners to be used for their bear bile, have now been converted to 'exhibition' bears; essentially meaning bear farmers will alternatively make money from these bears by exhibiting them in zoo conditions.

While the government is currently allowing some bears to be converted into exhibition bears, they have openly committed to not allowing bear owners to reverse the use of these bears back to being exploited for their bile for traditional medicine purposes.

Owners of exhibition bears need legal permission to breed exhibition bears, and the government has stated this permission will not be granted for those bears converted from bile purposes, and breeding of any exhibition bears without permission will be prosecuted.

A DNA database to improve monitoring of exhibition bears, similar to the database for bile bears, should be considered. This will help address loopholes in management and identify any violations of policy.

World Animal Protection and GKU will continue to monitor the use of exhibition bears and work with the government to ensure the bear bile industry does not resume in South Korea.

Moving forward together

Continuing cooperation and collaboration

Since its start in South Korea in 1981, bear bile farming has been an ever-evolving and complex situation. Unravelling these challenges would not have been possible without the support of individual stakeholders, many who have dedicated years to help reach a favourable resolution.

Only when all stakeholders, including the Bear Farmers Association, the Ministry of Environment, experts from the veterinary, government and academic fields, NGOs and others, joined together, did it become possible to resolve the challenges and reach a positive outcome for bears.

Cooperation and collaboration must continue now the sterilisation programme is complete. Together we will continue to move forward with the discussions on next moves post-sterilisation, through the Task Force Committee.

GKU also plans to work with the government to ensure that bears remaining on farms are kept under the best welfare conditions possible.

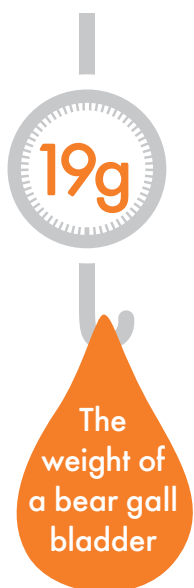
Our work in South Korea will ultimately ensure the government commits to ending the bear bile industry, and they openly oppose any resumption of bears being used for bile extraction.

Our vision is the pathway we have followed in South Korea will serve as an example to move and inspire other countries to end bear bile farming and keep bears in the wild where they belong.



Appendix 1

Understanding bear bile farming



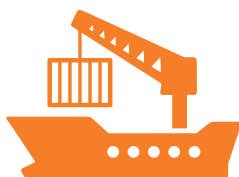
329



The natural monument designation number of Asiatic Black Bears

496

The number of the bears imported for the purpose of re-export between 1981 and 1985



39

The number of bear farms in South Korea as of the end of 2016

344

The number of exhibition bears



719

The number of farmed bears



Public support

A 2005 survey Korean Traditional Medicine Practitioners Poll on farmed bears and bear gall bladders, commissioned by GKU and World Animal Protection found:

93.3%

of Korean traditional medicine practitioners believed that people simply take bear bile without prescription because of blind faith in its efficacy.

95.6%

of Koreans 'have never purchased or intend to purchase bear bile.' (Public poll on bear bile, 2005)

80%

support ending bear bile farming. According to a survey of bear farmers in 2007, 80% of bear farmers agree with the policy to end bear bile farming, and would be willing to cooperate if appropriate compensation was offered.

Appendix 2

Members of Parliament (MP) who supported and agreed on special bills related to bear farming

Below is a list of Members of Parliament who supported and agreed on the special bills described within the text.

Law for which bill was proposed

Signatories

Special Act for Farmed Bear Management proposed by MP Heedeok Hong (2010)

Hee-deok Hong, Ki-kab Kang, Seong-cheon Kang, Jeong-sook Gwak, Young-gil Gwon, Sang-hee Kim, Jae-yoon Kim, Tae-won Kim, Seon-sook Park, Eun-soo Park, Won-il Yu, Myoung-soo Lee, Mi-kyoung Lee, Jeong-hee Lee, Han-seong Lee, Dong-young Cheong, Mun-soon Choi, Young-pyo Hong

Special Act for Farmed Bear Management proposed by MP Hana Jang (2013)

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