

TIGER CENSUS OF TIGER MISSING LINK FOUNDATION-WWW.TIGERLINK.ORG

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IT IS VITAL FOR SUCH DECISION MAKING POLICIES TO EVEN BE CONSIDERED THAT ACCURATE INFORMATION IS PROVIDED TO THE SERVICE. OUR CENSUS IS THE MOST CURRENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATED WITH CAPTIVE TIGER POPULATIONS IN THE USA.

The current captive tiger population within the United States of America is now at 2,833 as of September 1st 2012 (TIGER MISSING LINK FOUNDATION – WERNER 2013).

FURTHERMORE, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT ANY OF THE CAPTIVE TIGERS WITHIN THE USA ARE

CONTRIBUTING TO THE CHINESE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE MARKET, WHICH IS POPULAR AMONG ASIAN'S. THERE ARE NO CASES OF CAPTIVE TIGERS BEING SLAUGHTERED FOR ANY MARKET.

TIGER MISSING LINK FOUNDATION AND ITS MEMBERSHIP BASE OF 38,362 HOUSEHOLDS ARE OPPOSED TO REMOVING THE SO CALLED "GENERIC TIGER" FROM EXEMPTION OF THE CBW REGISTRATION.

The USDA and state records validate our research that there are less than 3,000 tigers in captivity in the USA. The population of generic tigers and the number of facilities that maintain these animals has been declining.

The CBW exemption has allowed free movement of tigers between managing facilities, which has greatly increased the genetic diversity and overall health of the captive tiger population.

Furthermore, current Federal laws already criminalize the sale of tiger parts, and are well enforced.

Again, there is no evidence that USA captive tigers are involved in the Chinese Traditional Medicine Market.

DNA studies have shown that up to 25% of previously thought "generic" tigers are indeed purebred subspecies. DNA samples of generic tigers showed that these tigers have unique genetic markers that extend the endemic diversity of known subspecies tigers. DNA studies have shown that the genetic difference between the subspecies is less than 10% of the difference between human races. According to geneticists, "a tiger, is a tiger, is a tiger."

CBW registration cannot act as a national registry since it only deals with interstate commerce, not instate sales, or private ownership, or breeding. The majority of tiger facilities and their felines are not eligible for a CBW registration due to the F & W interpretation that "enhancement of propagation of species" the basis of the permit, does not include animals of unknown or mixed sub-species origin.

Generic tigers is a mislabel and the actual terminology should be corrected to hybridization as tigers are not a brand name such as those found among staple goods or services or other recognized brandings within the marketplace. This statement or mislabeling of tigers shows ignorance at best.

Hybrid vigorous tigers perform the exact same and vital importance to the mission of saving tigers from extinction as that of the so-called purebred tigers perform. All captive tigers are a natural resource supporting captive

management of the species, as well as providing for conservation fund raising endeavors while also supporting public education and most importantly conservation research.

Most of the captive tigers on exhibit are superior at providing vital support dollars needed for conservation efforts.

One of the most unique positions of captive tigers is the amount of financial support generated through public exhibition. This financial support is directly attributed to the public support tied to rare color variations among private-sector tigers. Many of these captive tigers will be ineligible for registration and commercial activity.

The Federal Government through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) already tracks inventories of captive tigers involved in both interstate and intrastate commerce, including birth, death, and transfer information. The re-regulation of captive tigers by the USFWS is nothing more than a duplication of services at best.

According to all research and little to no results as associated to declining populations, it is clear that wild tiger conservation efforts have failed, thus making captive husbandry more important than ever. Large and diverse captive populations have the best chances of long-term survival. If USFWS restricts commerce of "generic" tigers, many zoos and exhibitors will lose critical funding that supports current tiger husbandry and conservation management applications.

It is noted and should be brought forth that the managed and fragmented gene pools of so-called "Subspecies Pure" tigers found among American Zoo & Aquarium Association (AZA) are not secure. The zoo-tiger is an endemic population and could face extinction due to inbreeding associated among closed populations. Further noted the zoo-tigers are subject to economic uncertainties that plague municipally owned zoos. Catastrophic disease outbreaks can easily contribute to a national tiger crisis within these high traffic public facilities when compared to private-sector sites. Further, it is noted that these zoo-tigers within the Tiger Species Survival Plan (T-SSP) are being inbred and started out on false assumptions that they were unrelated as applied to founder-stock back in 1982 when the Tiger SSP was formed. There has been little genetic testing applied to zoo tigers to correct this "assumption" as related to mean kinship among zoo-tigers, especially so among the SSP participants.

None of the reasons given for removing the exemption will be solved because almost no private tiger facilities will qualify for the CBW registration. What is really needed is a national studbook registry with greater access to genetic testing of all tigers.

In the Service of the Tigers,

Brian Werner

Executive Director

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