

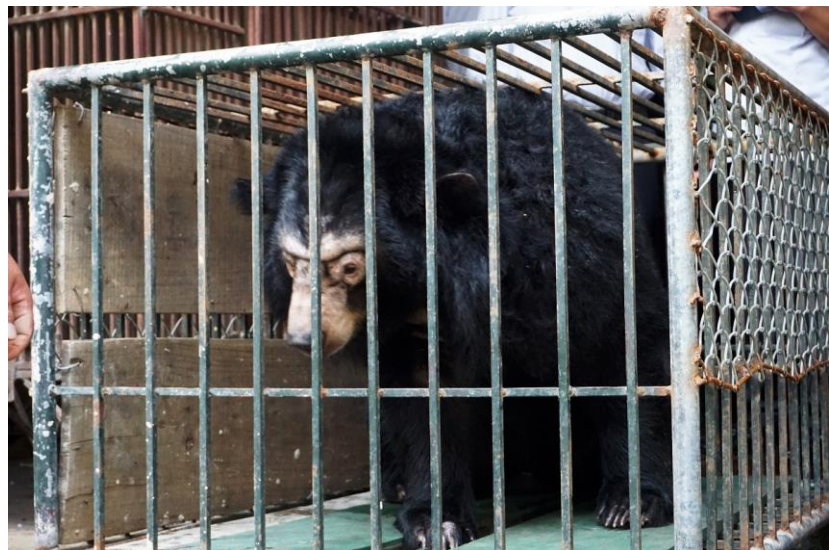
August 9, 2017

## Bear chipping program roll out strengthens bear farm monitoring

**Hanoi** (August 9, 2017) - Hanoi Forest Protection Department in coordination with World Animal Protection has completed the re-microchipping of more than 200 remaining captive bears on farms in Hanoi, one of the hotspots in Vietnam in terms of both the captive bear population and concentration of farms. The latest electronic chips now allow safer and more efficient monitoring of the bears without the need for anesthesia.

The recent re-microchipping program in Hanoi is part of a new strategy developed by a coalition of NGOs (World Animal Protection, Education for Nature - Vietnam and Four Paws International) in partnership with the government to expedite the end of bear farming in Vietnam.

In 2005, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and World Animal Protection (formally World Society for the Protection of Animals) initiated a program to register and insert microchips in more than 4,300 captive bears on hundreds of farms throughout the country. This was the first step in an integrated and strategic campaign to phase out bear farming in Vietnam. The registration and microchipping process was mainly aimed at preventing new illegally sourced bears (without microchips) from entering farms and ensuring improved monitoring of farms for illegal activities.



*One illegal bear in Phuc Tho District was discovered and confiscated during the microchipping program in Hanoi.*

Thanks to the strong commitment from the government, hard work by provincial Forest Protection Departments in enforcing the law, as well as NGOs and members of the public over the last 12 years, the number of captive bears has decreased dramatically to a little over 1,200 today (according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in 2015).

"We have achieved significant progress since 2005, when the government initiated efforts to phase out bear bile farming in Vietnam," says Mrs. Bui Thi Ha, Director of Policy and Legislative Campaigns at ENV. "Not only has the number of bears on farms been reduced by about 70%, but bear bile use has also dropped by more than 61%." Mrs. Ha also stresses that there have been corresponding improvements in the law and that application of the law by enforcement agencies is far more effective today than it was twelve years ago.

Mrs. Ha cites the successful closure of bear bile farms in Quang Ninh in 2015 as an example, and notes that collaboration between ENV and the Quang Ninh provincial government successfully put a stop to "bear bile tourism" in the province.

"Bear bile farming is coming to an end," says Mrs. Ha. "We are continuing to work hard to expedite an end to bear bile farming, working hand in hand with government, local law enforcement and members of the public to see this through to completion."

Asked about the recent re-commitment by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to bring an end to bear bile farming in Vietnam, Mrs. Ha says, “We are pleased to see MARD recommit publicly to this important objective, and we would like to extend our sincere thanks to all international organizations that have and continue to contribute to our efforts to end bear farming in Vietnam.”

Mrs. Ha notes, “Everyone has an important role to play that best suits their skills and expertise, whether it is providing a secure home and environment for bears transferred or confiscated from farms, or contributing in some other way to help us bring this cruel and illegal business to an end.”

Mr. Karan of World Animal Protection, which initiated efforts in Vietnam to end bear bile farming back in 2004, emphasized the importance of capitalizing on the momentum resulting from the successful re-chipping operation in Hanoi. “It’s critical that authorities effectively monitor farms post microchipping of bears to ensure bear farmers do not engage in any form of exploitation of their captive bears, including trading them illegally.”

“At the same time,” says Mr. Karan, “we plan to expand the re-microchipping program to other key provinces where there are concentrations of bears and bear bile farms.”

Mr. Karan, echoing the sentiments of Mrs. Ha says, “Our efforts since 2005 have achieved substantial progress and success thus far, but this fight is not over until each and every bear from these bile farms is safely transferred to a rescue center, and the bile business is finished forever in Vietnam.”

ENV welcomes the recent addition of Four Paws International to Vietnam. Four Paws is in the process of constructing a state of the art sanctuary for bears in Ninh Binh province which will greatly assist in providing more space for bears that are confiscated or transferred from farms.

A recent short film highlighting progress in ending bear farming in Vietnam can be viewed at the following link: <http://bit.ly/2uycYZ2>

## **ENDS**

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### **About ENV**

Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam’s first non-governmental organization focused on the conservation of nature and the protection of the environment. ENV combats the illegal wildlife trade and aims to foster greater understanding amongst the Vietnamese public about the need to protect nature and wildlife.

ENV employs creative and innovative strategies to influence public attitudes and reduce demand for wildlife trade products. ENV works closely with government partners to strengthen policy and legislation, and directly supports enforcement efforts in the protection of endangered species of regional, national, and global significance.

Since 2007, ENV has focused its activities on three major program areas that comprise ENV’s integrated strategic approach for addressing illegal wildlife trade in Vietnam. These include:

- Reducing consumer demand for wildlife products through investment in a long-term and sustained effort to influence public attitudes and behavior.
- Strengthening enforcement through direct support and assistance to law enforcement agencies, and mobilizing active public participation in helping combat wildlife crime.
- Working with policy-makers to strengthen legislation, close loopholes in the law, and promote sound policy and decision-making relevant to wildlife protection.