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Give bears a better life at a rescue center!

With farm bear numbers in Vietnam dropping steadily, Education for Nature – Vietnam has just released a film, [“Better life for bears”](#) aimed at helping speed up the process.

The film highlights the transformed “better life” that is awaiting Vietnam’s captive bile bears at rescue centers and sanctuaries and seeks to encourage owners to surrender their remaining bears and enable them to live out the rest of their days peacefully and pain-free. The film is intended to give bear owners a better visualization of three of the seven bear sanctuaries which meet international standards for keeping bears.



With detailed information and diverse images illustrating the life of rescued bears after years in captivity, the film and an associated brochure ([Vietnamese version](#)) being distributed to Forest Protection Departments and bear owners in all provinces where bears remain on bile farms, will better help FPDs explain to bear farm owners the “Better life for bears” that awaits their animals once the decision is made to transfer their bears.

At present, there are seven bear rescue centers across the country directly managed by the State or built and operated by non-governmental organizations. Three of them meet the international gold standard, namely BEAR SANCTUARY Ninh Binh operated by FOUR PAWS, Vietnam Bear Rescue Centre run by Animals Asia, and Cat Tien Bear Sanctuary operated by Free The Bears.

Ms. Nguyen Phuong Dung, ENV’s Vice Director said: *“In many cases, there is a perception by bear farmers that their bears get better care and live a better life in captivity on bile farms than they would at a rescue center. This is far from the truth as can be seen by the showcase brochure distributed to bear owners,”* Dung says. *“We hope that once bear farmers are aware of the better life that awaits their bears at a bear sanctuary, as illustrated in the film, many of them will consider turning over their bears.”*

In 2005, there were more than 4,300 captive bears documented at hundreds of farms throughout the country. However, thanks to the collective efforts of the Vietnamese authorities, NGOs, and members of the public in fighting against bear bile farming and raising the public’s awareness, the number of farm bears has slumped to fewer than 750 bears. Moreover, there are 25 bear farm-free provinces, and momentum is building to expedite an end to bear farming in Vietnam.

Notably, thanks to the establishment of top-quality bear rescue centers throughout the country, an increasing number of bear owners have chosen to give their bears a better life by voluntarily transferring them to these special bear sanctuaries where the bears are offered a species-appropriate home with medical treatment, a healthy diet, a decent living space, and room to exercise in a large outdoor enclosure.



As a result, 19 bears were transferred to rescue centers last year. At the current rate of transfer, bear rescue centers are more than capable of accommodating surrendered bears. In the event of a sudden spike in transfers, the Vietnamese government and the NGO community would work together to find a solution.

“Farm bears often suffer from a variety of physical and psychological problems, remnants of a decade or more being exploited for their bile.

Many have been caged since they were cubs, and are long overdue a better life at a rescue center where there is much more appropriate housing available. It’s high time for bear owners to do the right thing and allow their captive bears a better life,” Ms Dung added.

Ms. Dung, meanwhile, also urged the public to “stand up and get involved” by committing not to use bear bile, encouraging others to protect bears, and taking action, such as educating others and reporting bear crimes to ENV’s Wildlife Crime Hotline 1800-1522.

ENV wishes to thank World Animal Protection for financial support in producing this resource as well as for their commitment and support toward expediting an end to bear farming in Vietnam. We would also like to thank Animals Asia Foundation, Free the Bears and FOUR PAWS as well for their continued support.

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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.