

REALLY RHINOS!

7-3, Fall, 1993

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TO PAY OR NOT TO PAY?

Rhino Horn; Stockpile Acquisition, Compensation & Destruction: Does it Serve the Interests of Rhino Conservation? [by Esmond Bradley Martin, et al] Excerpted from WARA, 16(3):17-22, May/June, 1993.

At the 28th meeting of the Standing Committee of CITES held in June, 1992, Annex 2, of the Summary Report stated that it 'regards the existence of substantial illegal stockpiles of rhino horn in some countries, including parties to the Convention, as totally unacceptable to and incompatible with implementation of the Convention'...

No one disputes the existence of 'illegal' rhino horn stocks in various parts of the world, but, with the exception, they remain hidden from government

authorities. There are legal rhino horn stocks and products in the hands of government agencies and private individuals all over the world.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service is considering a petition to certify that Taiwan, China, South Korea and Yemen are undermining the effectiveness of CITES by continuing to allow trade in rhino horn.

"China is the main country in the world making medicines containing rhino horn; the factories use up about 650 kilos of rhino horn a year.

"The authors have conducted extensive investigations on the rhino horn trade in Asian and Middle Eastern end-use markets and it is probably not an exaggeration to state that our collective research on this issue presents virtually the entire body of published market survey data to date.

Drawing on this experience, the destruction of rhino horn stockpiles, especially those privately-owned, as advocated under the scenarios mentioned above, are not practical and would ultimately be counterproductive with serious and detrimental consequences to rhino conservation as a whole.

It is very likely that the majority of privately-held rhino horn stocks ultimately produced during any buy-out scheme would come from outsiders to the traditional medicine market (middlemen importers, speculators, and black market dealers) who lack any direct avenue for dispensation of their own. The real criminals will have profited with their anonymity intact, while the traditional trade in rhino horn as medicine will continue in one form or another.