

More endangered species to be brought under control

More endangered species will be put on the protection list under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance from tomorrow (March 13).

Newly-listed species include sawfish, European Eel and Brazil wood, a spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department said.

Moreover, the quantitative limitation on personal or household effects of caviar that is exempted from permit requirement will be lowered from 250 grams to 125 grams.

Under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, except with exemptions, the import, introduction from the sea, export and possession of the controlled species, including their parts and derivatives, are subject to licensing controls.

"The control of the newly-listed species will bring Hong Kong in line with the latest revisions to the list of controlled species of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)," the spokesman said.

The import and export requirements will take effect on the day of the commencement of the new control. However, a grace period of 3 months is provided for the possession of newly listed species that are in possession before the commencement of the legislative amendment. The grace period to apply for a possession licence for Sawfish and live European Eel of wild origin will end on June 12, 2009.

The spokesman reminded traders of sawfish and live European Eel of wild origin to apply for a possession licence within the grace period.

As Brazil wood is considered less endangered, the possession or control of the species is exempted from the licensing requirements to facilitate legitimate trade without compromising Hong Kong's obligations under CITES.

"Nevertheless, the import and export of such species will still require licences

issued in advance by the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation," the spokesman said.

Any person found guilty of importing, exporting or possessing any endangered species without a licence is liable to a maximum fine of \$5 000 000, imprisonment for two years and mandatory forfeiture of the specimens.

Ends/Thursday, March 12, 2009