



HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

CANADA

Duncan McLean
President
Waddingtons
275 King Street East, 2nd Floor
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5A 1K2

May 21, 2014

Dear Mr. McLean,

Humane Society International (HSI) is extremely concerned that Waddingtons is continuing to sell the products of endangered species, in spite of a major global effort to protect them and, in the case of some populations of rhino and elephant, to prevent their extinction.

We also note, with alarm, that you plan to auction three more rhino horn carvings and numerous ivory pieces on 9th June.

The modus operandi of wildlife smugglers has broadened in scope in recent years, mainly because of the extremely high value now placed on rhino horn, and we are seeing unprecedented wildlife crimes such as the wholesale theft of antique rhino horns from taxidermied rhinos in museums across Europe. HSI has documented over 40 such cases, but Europol estimates that more than 100 horns have been stolen from European museums and other establishments. In addition, horns have been stolen from zoos, private collections, taxidermists' premises, antiques markets and auction houses. An Irish crime gang that specialises in antiques, and operates in Europe, North America (including Canada), Australia and east Asia, was responsible for many of these thefts.

As you probably know, in recent years rhino horns and horn carvings have sold at UK auctions for far higher prices than expected and there is strong evidence that auctioned antique rhino horn and ivory carvings have been bought by east Asian bidders – or their proxies – and exported to China or Vietnam, where they are used by the wealthy as a high-end gifts and bribes. In the UK, it is known that the purchase of antique rhino horn has been used as a method of laundering money.

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The sale of rhino horn items of any age has become a cause for international concern. In 2013 the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) adopted Decision 16.84, which requests all signatories to “*consider introducing stricter domestic measures to regulate the re-export of rhinoceros horn products from any source*”, as well as to “*introduce national measures, as appropriate, in support of CITES implementation, to regulate internal trade in specimens of rhinoceros, including any specimen that appears from an accompanying document, the packaging, a mark or label, or from any other circumstances, to be a rhinoceros part or derivative*”¹.

We are concerned that some of the “antique” horns being sold at auction are not genuine, and that, therefore, newly-poached rhino horn is being carved to supply the “antiques” market. An informant in east Asia reported to HSI three years ago that traders are staining new rhino horn with tea to make it appear old. The British Museum reports that, “the golden-brown colour of Chinese rhinoceros horn objects is achieved by staining and polishing”². UK antiques expert Paul Fraser recently commented that, “the sheer frequency of trading in rhino horn antiques suggests that a number are not genuine”³.

As part of “Operation Crash” in the United States, an antiques dealer was arrested in February 2012 after violating interstate laws by buying mounted black rhino heads and replacing their horns with replicas. Fish and Wildlife agents found “numerous carved and partially carved rhinoceros horns”, as well as fake rhino horns at his home⁴.

The US Justice department reported in February 2013 that a Chinese national was arrested after attempting to buy two black rhino horns from an undercover agent during the “Original Miami Beach Antique Show”⁵. His accomplice had sourced rhino horns for him in the US and he smuggled the horns in porcelain vases to Hong Kong and China.

A third Chinese national was charged with smuggling rhino horn libation cups from New York to Hong Kong. Another member of the gang admitted to purchasing rhino carvings that had apparently been purchased in, and smuggled from, the United States⁶.

In January last year, two Chinese passengers arriving from France were arrested in Shanghai with 48 pieces of rhino horn and ivory items worth over 5 million Yuan (US\$805,000) Customs inspectors discovered 10 white rhinoceros horns and related products, a white rhinoceros horn cup and 37 ivory products in their luggage. The suspects said they had bought the rhinoceros

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/pdf/guidance_rhino_horns.pdf

² http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/asia/r/rhinoceros_horn_cup.aspx

³ <http://www.paulfrasercollectibles.com/News/UNIQUE-ITEMS/2010-News-Archive/Charging-ahead-the-rising-prices-of-rhino-horn-antiques/4286.page>

⁴ Antiques dealer pleads guilty to illegal trafficking of endangered rhinoceros horns.

<http://www.ice.gov/news/releases/1208/120802newark.htm>

⁵ US Dept of Justice, February 13, 2013. <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2013/February/13-enrd-194.html>

⁶ As above

horn and ivory from auction houses, antiques shops and fairs in Paris. They knew it was illegal to bring the products into China but anticipated substantial profits, according to officials⁷.

We note that in the “past auctions” pages of your website, there are details of numerous rhino horn carvings and whole raw horns that you have sold in the past four years for much higher prices than anticipated – in some cases more than ten times the estimate. In the case of the raw horns that you have sold recently, the most expensive was sold for \$65,750. When ground down into powder, the value of this horn – based on a very conservative average horn weight of 3.5 kg – would be valued at between USD227,500 and USD297,500 on the Vietnamese traditional medicine market.

By continuing to sell rhino horn carvings, Waddingtons is inadvertently contributing to the escalating demand for rhino horn in east Asia and, therefore, to the mass slaughter of rhinos. While the traditional consumers of rhino horn as a medicine continue to believe that it cures serious illnesses, their consumption is now being overtaken by that of a new generation of wealthy people, who use it a status symbol, often in the form of gifts. The inflated prices being paid for these items is evidence of the widespread demand for them. As with many consumer products, peer pressure ensures that increasing numbers of wealthy people are prepared to pay very high prices for the social status that these products are thought to confer on them.

Ivory carvings are also a status symbol in east Asia and are, again, given as gifts to impress business associates and employers. As personal incomes rise, demand for these carvings is escalating, particularly in China. The result has been the slaughter of tens of thousands of elephants in each year of this decade and the imminent extinction of a number of smaller populations.

There is also growing evidence of the involvement of armed insurgents in the poaching of elephants in Africa. Reports state that the trade in ivory has been used as a fund-raising mechanism for groups such as Somalia’s Al-Shabaab (linked to Al-Qaeda), Uganda’s Lord’s Resistance Army and the Sudanese Janjawid. Apart from the slaughter of elephants, these groups are responsible for genocide, kidnappings, the mass rape of women and children and, ultimately, the destabilisation of whole regions of the continent. It is for these reasons that the Clinton Initiative, the US National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking, the Elephant Protection Initiative, spearheaded by Botswana, and the UK Royal Family’s United for Wildlife project have all been established in recent months.

We believe that Waddingtons should become part of the global effort to protect rhinos and elephants, rather than a potential contributor to their demise. We therefore request that you withdraw all ivory and rhino horn items from your upcoming auctions and that you issue an explanation of why your company no longer wishes to trade in these products.

⁷ *ivory, rhino horn smuggling rises*. <http://www.shanghaidaily.com/metro/ivory-rhino-horn-smuggling-rises/shdaily.shtml>

While we appreciate that you plan to donate the proceeds of these sales to a hospital, we do not believe that selling products that may well increase the threat to endangered species is justified under any circumstances. We suggest that you consider simply donating your commission to the hospital instead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rebecca Aldworth', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rebecca Aldworth
Executive Director