



DALLA PARTE
DEGLI ANIMALI

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TIGERS' ECONOMY – A HIDDEN TRADE

LAV: "ITALY LEADER OF SHAME IN THE BREEDING AND TRADE OF TIGERS. IMMEDIATE DRAFT DECREE THAT APPLIES THE PROHIBITIONS AND PROVISIONS CONTAINED IN ARTICLE 14, LETTER Q OF LAW 53."

A shameful record crowns Italy, along with France, as a leader in Europe in the trade and breeding of tigers, with an estimate of about 85% of the existing big cats in the old continent. The attached images were anonymously received by LAV and exclusively authorised for publication by Repubblica.it. They show a system legitimised by current legislation, but no less despicable. LAV considers it unacceptable that any animal and in particular an endangered species protected by international standards could be sold or transferred like any object, or forced to spend an entire existence in a cramped, mobile cage. The fact that all this is legal makes it even more unacceptable.

Neither Italy nor Europe, unlike the majority of the countries that joined the Washington Convention, has transposed [decision 14.69](#) made by the 14th Conference of the Parties in June 2007. This decision has very serious consequences on the fate and life of thousands of animals. In fact, it defined the **ban on the breeding of tigers** (and other Asian big cats) in captivity, unless required for the conservation of the species in nature. Moreover, the ban on trade in tiger parts and derived products is explicit.

Tigers are severely endangered, currently reduced to **about 12 thousand specimens worldwide**. Of these, only **3,900 are in nature**, while the remaining **8,100** are bred and held in captivity.

There is a significant difference between tigers in nature, which enjoy maximum international protection, although always threatened by poachers and traffickers, and those held in captivity. It is related to reproduction: **cubs that are born in captivity lose all kinds of rights and are treated, by international trade laws, as objects or merchandise.**

LAV had dealt with big cats already in 2019: **ten tigers were transported from a facility in Latina** to the border between **Poland and Belarus**.

LAV immediately contacted the Dutch Association AAP, which decided to start an animal recovery operation. Poznan Zoo was able to take only four of them, so, AAP stepped in to move the remaining five tigers (Softi, Toph, Aqua, Merida, and Sanson) to their Primadomus rescue center located in Villena (Spain). **The tigers are fully**

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recovering, thanks to the relevant work managed by AAP's animal keepers and team managers.

Recent surveys have shown that, from the data in our possession and from studies and surveys carried out by journalists and other associations, **not even the state authorities in charge are aware of the number of tigers present on the Italian territory**, or their knowledge is apparently partial and far from the numbers verified by LAV.

Due to regulatory gaps, a well-established system allows circus families holding the relevant licenses to breed, transfer, rent, lend, and export animals such as tigers or other protected species. In this trading system that revolves around living beings, the only distinction made is between wild and farmed animals. Captivity-bred tigers have actually been defined by various animal rights associations (such as Austrian Four Paws), as “second-class tigers” precisely to underline the total loss of rights, often basic, or in any case, the same protections and detention requirements. According to CITES regulations, these animals can be dealt with as if they were “objects,” or movable property.

This business of big cats is perfectly described by the images in our possession: the owner of the tigers and holder of the famous license explains in detail how easy it is, thanks to the current legislation, to “park” mobile cages with tigers inside on the land of owners interested in exhibiting them for a few months.

Thanks to this new study, which combines elements collected by LAV with other elements anonymously received by the association and data collected in months of study and in-depth analysis, we definitely want to unmask an intolerable system, which sees circuses and individuals dispose of the life and rights of animals, even endangered ones.

Under the veil, we can find a consolidated and uncontrolled mechanism, where animals are the only ones to pay with a whole life in captivity, and where the very few rules that regulate their protection leave ample room for grey areas due to serious legislative gaps. The current regulatory system leaves circus and travelling entertainment companies free, or with very few prohibitions, to breed almost any type of animal (even having fun creating hybrid “chimeras”), and to rent, sell, lend, hold them in cages and much more. In one sentence: they can gamble these animals' lives.

Whether they are banned animals or not, of any species and kingdom, the idea is always the same: **how can it still be tolerated that living beings are considered collectors' items?** Merchandise?

Why do we consider it "normal" to see wild and exotic animals, often among the few specimens of their kind, spending their entire existence in a cage or a terrarium, despite scientific evidence of their suffering and the objective health risks for the whole community?

How is it possible that Italy has no restriction on the reproduction in captivity of tigers and other big cats for sale, transfer, or rental?

We find this unacceptable!

By 8 May, the Government is called to approve the Draft Legislative Decree to adapt the national legislation to the provisions of European Regulation 2016/429 on transmissible animal diseases providing, as established by article 14 letter q) of European Delegation Law no. 53 of 22 April 2021, some important changes including the prohibition of import, possession and reproduction of wild and exotic animals. The article was provided for thanks to a parliamentary amendment, approved with the Government's favourable opinion, for the prevention of further zoonoses and pandemics such as Covid 19, and previously Sars, Mers, avian influenza, and Ebola, as well as offering animal protection, today a principle reinforced by the provision of the new article 9 of the Constitution.

Hence, LAV asks the Ministers of Health Speranza, of Ecological Transition Cingolani, and the Undersecretary of European Affairs Amendola, to implement the Delegation Law and put an end to this unnecessary suffering!

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