

## Shahtoosh: illegal trafficking of shawls made from Tibetan antelope wool

Shawls made of shahtoosh-wool are illegal luxury products from the wool of the protected Tibetan Antelopes. In the last couple of years the Swiss Customs Administration (SCA) and the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO) repeatedly have seized shahtoosh shawls.

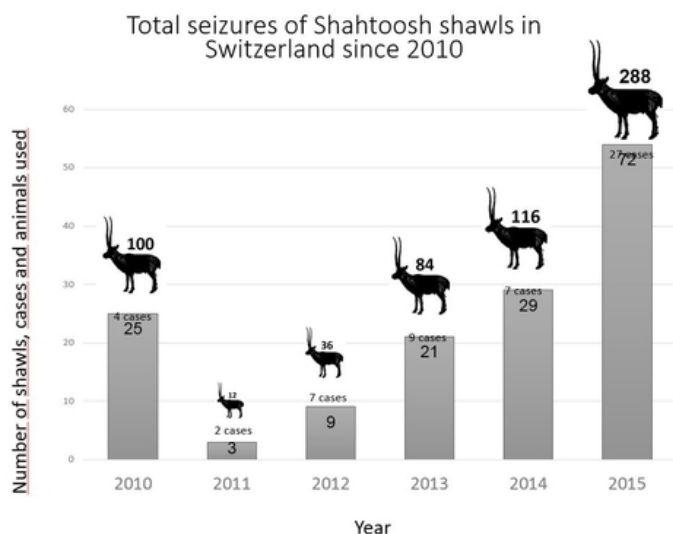
### News

#### Switzerland is strengthening its controls and international cooperation to better combat the illegal trade in shawls made from Tibetan antelope wool

Since 2013, the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO) has strengthened its controls in cooperation with the Federal Customs Administration (FCA) in order to combat the illegal trade in shawls made from Tibetan antelope wool (shahtoosh). As a result, more of these shawls have been confiscated every year. Moreover, international cooperation and awareness raising among potential shawl buyers are essential in order to counter this illegal trade effectively and to help to safeguard this strictly protected and endangered species.


[Switzerland is strengthening its controls and international cooperation to better combat the illegal trade in shawls made from Tibetan antelope wool](#)

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The graph shows the total number of shawls seized in Switzerland for that year, along with the number of cases and an estimate of how many Tibetan antelopes were killed for the shawls (average of four individuals/ shawl). The rise in seizures since 2011 can partially be explained by the increased enforcement effort by the FSVO resulting in several focus inspections and consequently more seizures, as well as the training of customs officials in the identification of Shahtoosh shawls, increasing the number of seizures and detection rate. Therefore, it is not possible to interpret a steady increase but rather the graph shows the effect of intensified inspections and perhaps a trade that was present before but went undetected.



#### Fine and confiscation

Under the Federal Act on the Trade in Protected Animal and Plant Species, illegally importing shahtoosh wool shawls is punishable by a heavy fine. In addition, the shawls are confiscated by the authorities. This customs operation sadly confirms that there is a market for this luxury merchandise in Switzerland. It also points out the need for continuing

## The Tibetan antelope, an endangered species

The operations reflect a worrying trend, because between two and five antelopes have to be killed to make just one pure shawl. Since it is impossible to domesticate the animals and shear them, the population of this species is in drastic decline. Luxury lovers are willing to pay several thousand francs for these shawls because Tibetan antelope wool is regarded as the finest, softest and warmest in the world.



Male Tibetan antelope (Pantholops hodgsonii). Image Prof. H. Haller

### CITES

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, CITES), also known as the "Washington Convention", is a trade agreement. Its objective is the conservation and sustainable use of the planet's animal and plant species. Its application in Switzerland is subject to the Federal Act on the Trade in Protected Animal and Plant Species (FA-CITES; RS 453) and related ordinances (O-CITES, RS 453.0 and the Ordinance on controls of trade in protected animal and plant species, RS 453.1).

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