



## Joint efforts to combat the illegal trade in shahtoosh shawls

**Bern, 04.07.2016 - In 2015, 70 shawls made from the wool of the protected Tibetan antelope (shahtoosh shawls) were seized in Switzerland. Trade in these luxury products is prohibited. To combat this illegal trade, INTERPOL and Switzerland invited countries to a workshop to define measures for a coordinated international approach.**

In the workshop, held in Lyon in early July 2016, Switzerland and INTERPOL created an international network to strengthen the fight against the poaching of the Tibetan antelope as well as the smuggling of and trade in shahtoosh shawls. Representatives from ten countries of origin as well as transit, processing and consumer countries discussed causes and enforcement strategies. Among them were India, Kuwait, Nepal, China, Pakistan, Italy, the UK, Spain and Germany. Representatives from the CITES Secretariat (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) as well as from INTERPOL also participated. Specialists in the identification of these shawls coming from forensic institutes in India and the USA also attended the workshop. The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) contributed funds to make the workshop possible.

The workshop participants were trained in analytical methods and wool identification. By exchanging relevant information, next steps were identified and country-specific objectives defined. In the future, the network will enable a coordinated international approach to this illegal trade.

### Trade prohibited since 1979

Trade in Tibetan antelopes and products derived from them has been prohibited since 1979 under Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Despite this trade ban, more than 70 shawls made from the wool of the protected Tibetan antelope were seized in Switzerland in 2015. In order to produce a single shawl, two to five Tibetan antelopes have to be killed. Consequently, this protected species has seen its population decline by over 90 % since the beginning of the last century. Despite best efforts of the countries of origin, the international trade is flourishing.

### Switzerland has already strengthened cooperation

In Switzerland, the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office works closely with the Federal Customs Administration, the Federal Office of Police fedpol, the CITES Secretariat and INTERPOL. Since 2013, inspections have been intensified. Under the Federal CITES Act, the illegal importation of shawls made from shahtoosh wool is punishable by a fine, and the goods are seized. The rise in seizures since 2013 demonstrates the need to continue with inspections and to intensify national and international cooperation.

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