

Wildlife import rules to be tightened

The Ministry of International Trade and Industry will tighten its controls on trade in internationally designated species of endangered or threatened wildlife, a ministry official said Tuesday.

The action was announced in Japan for the upcoming gathering in Kyoto March 2 to 13 of signatories of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, commonly referred to as CITES.

Tadashi Sagisaka, director of MITI's import division, said the ministry will confirm the validity of a greater range of permits that exporters of CITES-listed species claim are issued by their governments.

The tightened monitoring of trade in such threatened species will be carried out in two stages, he said.

The first, starting this July, will involve only live animals listed in Appendix II and III of the CITES, whose imports to Japan amount to 2,500 cases annually.

The second, scheduled to be completed by the end of fiscal 1995, will cover all species listed under the two appendices, including animals and plants, whether alive or dead, as well as products made from them.

Appendix II lists about 250 species such as parrots, lions, orchids and coral, which are categorized as being at serious risk though not yet threatened with extinction.

Countries that want to protect indigenous populations of a particular species can place them in Appendix III. Trade in about 250 species in this category, including walrus and hippopotamuses, is regulated in the same way as Ap-

pendix II.

Japan's annual imports of Appendix II and III species total some 25,000 cases.

The species covered in Appendix I and some of those in the other two are already subject to strict monitoring in Japan.

Appendix I species are classified as threatened with extinction, and commercial trade in them and products based on them are banned under the 17-year-old CITES accord.

Some 500 species are listed in this category, including all sea turtles, apes, lemurs, giant pandas, many types of South American monkeys, great whales, cheetahs, leopards and tigers.

Under pressure from the United States, the Japanese government announced last year plans to ban by 1994 imports of hawksbill sea turtles.