Response from Dinerstein and Colleagues

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Jiang and colleagues continue to propose misinformed and fallacious solutions to the crisis facing wild tigers. They state that captive breeding is essential to conserve wild tigers, yet China lacks space to release captive tigers into the wild. Instead, they suggest tiger farms as a solution to preserving ex situ *genetic diversity. No credible zoo would suggest that rapidly bred captive tigers can contribute to genetic conservation stock. Jiang and colleagues confirm that their real goal is not conservation but economics: to breed tigers to sell their parts.*

To its credit, China has maintained a successful domestic ban on trade in tiger parts since 1993, even though a small minority of government officials have campaigned recently to lift it in response to pressure from tiger-farm owners. If tigers had effective protection throughout their range to accompany the trade ban, they would be flourishing; enough habitat exists to support four to five times their current population size. China's ban has, in fact, reduced demand; lifting it would undermine years of education and enforcement efforts.

Jiang and colleagues state that "the cost of killing a wild tiger is very high and creates a disincentive." The cost is not high economically, particularly in other range countries where poaching and smuggling are rampant. Recent press about bear and tiger parts smuggled into China further demolishes Jiang and colleagues' arguments that China's borders are impenetrable to illegal wildlife products.

A new survey by the Save the Tiger Fund (2007) shows that a majority of the Chinese populace supports keeping the ban, and would forsake tiger products to protect wild tigers. The traditional Chinese medicines industry supports retaining the ban. China should be promoting to the world the promising tiger conservation programs along its border with Russia. With proper protection, Amur tiger populations can expand rapidly—an outcome for which China would receive universal praise.

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