

## Hong Kong Customs detects two cases of illegally importing animals in fourth phase of “Pet Guardian” operation (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs has mounted an operation against the smuggling of animals, codenamed "Pet Guardian", with the Anti-Smuggling Bureau of Shenzhen Customs since November 2023. In late May this year, Hong Kong Customs launched the fourth phase of the operation, and detected two suspected cases of illegally importing animals yesterday (June 4). Three suspected illegally imported animals with an estimated market value of about \$20,000 were seized.

Yesterday, Hong Kong Customs at Sha Tau Kok spotted two separate situations of women who were seen pushing bikes and entering Hong Kong through the Chung Ying Street Checkpoint from the Mainland side of Chung Ying Street. Suspecting that there were animals inside the handbags on the bikes, in each case Customs officers immediately conducted a search on the women. A total of three suspected illegally imported animals, namely one kitten and two puppies, were uncovered inside the handbags. The two women, aged 55 and 32, were subsequently arrested.

The two cases have been handed over to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department for a follow-up investigation.

Being a government department specifically responsible for tackling smuggling, Customs will continue to enhance co-operation and intelligence exchanges with other law enforcement agencies, and carry out targeted anti-smuggling operations at suitable times to disrupt relevant crimes.

Under the Rabies Regulation, any person found guilty of illegally importing animals, carcasses or animal products is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for one year upon conviction.

