

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Lucrative Market of Ox Gallstones

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Post: Hong Kong

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Report Highlights:

U.S. beef processing plants should take note of the huge export potential of a cattle byproduct, ox gallstones, to the Hong Kong market. Ox gallstones are in high demand in the Chinese community as a precious Chinese herbal medicine. They are either sold as natural gallstones or combined with other ingredients as a proprietary Chinese medicine. The retail price of natural gall stones is as high as HK\$19,000 for one tael, ie. US\$65 per gram. A small pellet weighing three grams costs around US\$195. Currently, there are Hong Kong importers looking for supplies.

Gallstones harvested from cattle are a precious Chinese herbal medicine. They can be found in gallbladders after the bile is filtered without special processing. The gallstones are then ready for sale to buyers simply after being dried to remove all moisture. Gallstones are sold at the retail level either in their natural form without being processed, or as a propriety Chinese medicine mixed with other ingredients.

Natural gallstones are in high demand for use in Chinese medicine. Reportedly, the Chinese pharmaceutical industry requires about 100 metric tons (MT) of gallstones for a variety of propriety Chinese medicines each year, but domestic supply is barely one MT. The inadequate supply has triggered the emergence of synthetic/ artificial gallstones. Currently there are two types of artificial gallstones: one is manufactured based on chemical ingredients and another is artificially cultured. These artificial gallstones are meant to fill the demand for natural gallstones and have become an ingredient for a variety of proprietary Chinese medicines. However, the medicinal value of artificial gallstones is not considered to be comparable to natural ones. Therefore, the short supply and medicinal value of gallstones have resulted in the high value of natural gallstones.

The current retail price of unprocessed natural gallstones in its natural form sells at HK\$19,000 per tael, i.e. translated to US\$65 per gram.

The United States has an expansive cattle industry, slaughtering about 39 million head each year. U.S. beef processing plants are strongly encouraged to explore the possibility of incorporating a simple procedure to collect gallstones during the production process. Presently, a Hong Kong importer, who specializes in Chinese herbs and medicines, is very keen to bring in natural gallstones from the United States. U.S. exporters who want to explore the potential of exporting ox gallstones should contact the Agricultural Trade Office in Hong Kong at atohongkong@usda.gov.

Hong Kong's Import Regulation for Ox Gallstones

Ox gallstones are not regarded as food, therefore, they are not subject to Hong Kong's food regulations. Given that they are a well-documented Chinese medicine, it is regulated by the [Chinese Medicine Ordinance](#) (Cap.549) with the scientific name *Calculus Bovis*.

According to the Chinese Medicine Ordinance, Chinese herbal medicines (Chm) refer to substances specified in Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 of the Ordinance, which are Chm commonly used in Hong Kong. Ox gallstone or *Calculus Bovis* is listed on Schedule 2 of the Ordinance.

The Ordinance requires that traders who wish to engage in the business of retail and wholesale (including import) of all listed Chm must first apply for the relevant license from the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong. Moreover, all 31 listed substances on Schedule 1 and five of the substances listed under Schedule 2 are subject to licensing control. (These five substances refer to Flos Campsis, processed Radix Aconiti, processed Radix Aconiti Kusnezoffii, Radix Cletatidis and Radix Gentianae. Ox gallstone is not one of these five substances.) The importation and exportation of these substances requires a license issued by the Department of Health. (Food licenses and permits are issued by the Center for Food Safety.)

U.S. exports of ox gallstones are not required to provide any health certificates or an import license for shipments. The only requirement is that Hong Kong importers for this product must be license holders.

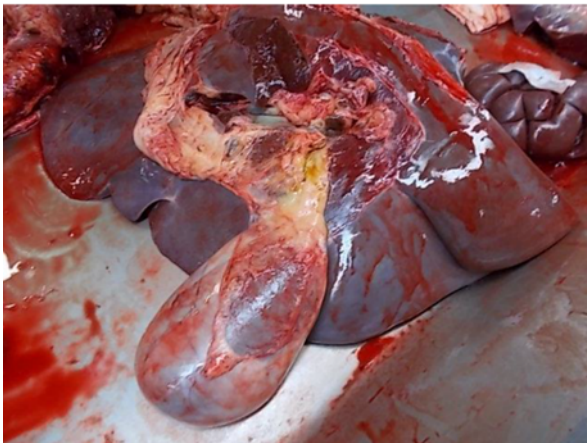
Details of Hong Kong's regulation of Chm can be found at this link:

www.cmro.gov.hk/html/eng/aboutus/service/ieccm.html.

Collection of Ox Gallstones

Given below is a description of the simple manual gallstone collection procedure which requires no sophisticated equipment.

Step 1. Remove the gallbladder from a cow



Step 2. Cut open the gallbladder to check if it contains any stones



Step 3. Bile juice drains off and stones, if exist, drop to the locked container through the hole



Step 4. Ox gallstones are collected in the container with the filter



Step 5. Rinse the gallstones with water and dry them



Step 6. Dry gallstones are ready for sale to HK importers



Attachments:

No Attachments.