



NEWS / JAPAN

Yahoo Japan to ban ivory sales on its auction site

Yahoo Japan says it will end the trade of ivory on its website from November, after pressure from conservationists.

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Yahoo Japan corporation says it will ban the sale of ivory on the country's largest online auction site, two years after its two largest domestic competitors made a similar pledge.

In a statement on Wednesday, the company said it will no longer allow users to sell ivory on its site YAHUOKU!.

Member states of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) agreed to ban the international trade of ivory in 1989.

[Japan](#) banned ivory imports the same year, but allowed the domestic sale of items

that were brought in before that law went into effect.

Conservationists have long argued that Japan's market created an environment that was ripe for smugglers to bring in new ivory and attempt to pass it off as ivory that had been in the country before the import ban.

Yahoo Japan said it decided to impose the ivory ban after it confirmed that ivory traded on its auction site was "smuggled abroad and detected by foreign customs authorities".

Lucrative trade

Conservation activists praised the move.

Margaret Kinnaird of the World Wildlife Fund said she hoped the decision "will encourage the Japanese government to look critically at the country's domestic market and its influence on international illegal trade".

E-commerce companies Rakuten Inc and Mercari Inc, which host the two other largest online auction sites in the country, banned ivory sales two years ago.

Ivory remains a multibillion-dollar industry worldwide, with elephant tusks and other body parts coveted in Asia and the Middle East for ornaments and use in traditional medicine.

In Japan, the tusks are commonly used to make "hanko" name seals, which, when dipped in red ink and stamped on paper, are used as a signature in a wide range of transactions.

Ivory auctioned on Yahoo Japan's site totalled about \$380,000 over a four week period in May and June last year, according to estimates from the wildlife trade monitoring group Traffic.

That included the sale of 4,414 ivory items and 35 whole tusks, which sell for about \$2,000 a piece, the group said.

Yahoo Japan's decision to ban the sale of ivory came as CITES hosted the World Wildlife Conference in Geneva, where several decisions were made on the trade of

ivory and elephants.

Last week, the CITES member states voted down a proposal from [Botswana](#) to allow some Southern African countries to sell their stockpiles of ivory, which had been seized from poachers or gathered from natural deaths.

On Tuesday, members [voted](#) to limit the trade of live African elephants to only within conservation in their natural habitat, effectively prohibiting the sale to zoos or entertainment venues around the world.

Several African countries voted against that ban, arguing such sales were important sources of revenue needed to continue conservation efforts.

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