

‘Possession of animals in IUCN list requires special permits’

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The possession, transport, and breeding or farming of wild animals, including the progenies that were bred in duly-registered wildlife farms require a special permit, officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said.

This as the DENR begins on Monday its formal investigation of a businessman from Quezon City whose two runaway ostriches went viral on social media. The animals were seen running around a private subdivision on Friday.

One of the two ostriches eventually perished due to stress, according to DENR Undersecretary Benny D. Antiporda.

He said the owner of the ostrich, Jonathan Cruz, has voluntarily turned over to the DENR-Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) one of the ostriches.

“Even so, we are not taking his words for it. We are going to investigate,” Antiporda told the BusinessMirror.

He said the DENR-BMB team was barred from entering the private subdivision as the entire National Capital Region was again placed under modified enhanced community quarantine.

An ostrich is a large, flightless bird native to Africa. There are two kinds of ostriches. One is in Appendix I of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) (only populations of Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and the Sudan. Under the International Union for Conservation of Nature

(IUCN), the Somali ostrich which has been found to be a distinct species is listed as “vulnerable”. The common ostrich is listed in the IUCN as “least concern”.

Generally, those under Appendix II can be bred. The progenies can be bought locally, or imported. However, only those with wildlife farm permits are allowed to export wild animals under Appendix II.

Wild animals under Appendix I, or critically endangered species, are strictly not allowed.

Initial investigation revealed that Cruz’s runaway ostrich was bought by Edwin Hara of San Jose, Nueva Ecija. He bought a total of 12 from a farm in Mindanao. Two of the ostriches went to Jonathan Cruz.

“All Jonathan Cruz needs to show us is the receipt to prove that he bought them from Mr. Hara or directly from the ostrich farm,” says DENR-BMB OIC Wildlife Resource Division Chief Theresa M. Tenazas.

Assistant Secretary Ricardo Calderon, the concurrent director of the DENR-BMB, said they will give Cruz the chance to present proof of legal possession or acquisition of the ostriches and wildlife transport permit as they begin a formal investigation on Monday.

He said wild animals bred in captivity like the saltwater crocodiles, which is now considered a farm animal, and could legally be sold for their meat, skin or other byproducts, still require appropriate permits from the DENR.

Mere possession of the wild animals, he said, requires a certificate of wildlife registration. To be allowed to legally breed wild animals in captivity, breeders must secure a Wildlife Farm Permit, which means the holder has the technical and financial capacity to operate a farm for that specific animal.

In the Philippines, ostriches are considered farm animals, and ostrich egg and meat are sold locally. For live ostriches, while buying them is no different from buying a goat, keeping them alive as pets would require a certificate of wildlife registration as proof of legal acquisition or ownership.

Failure to present proof of legal acquisition or transport permit for the ostriches means Cruz may face charges for violation of Republic Act 9147, or the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act.

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