

보도시점 2025. 12. 30.(화) 12:00 (수요일 조간) 배포 2025. 12. 29.(월)

Complete Ban on Bear Farming and Bear Bile Extraction After 40 Years

- Granting a guidance period to support civic groups' efforts to purchase the remaining captive bears
- Making all-out efforts to protect the remaining captive bears through cooperation with public zoos and expansion of private protection facilities

The Ministry of Climate, Energy and Environment (MCEE, Minister Kim Sunghwan) announced that, as the prohibition on bear farming and bile extraction by farms stipulated in the Wildlife Protection and Management Act (amended January 23, 2024; effective January 24, 2025) will come into effect* on January 1, 2026, it will implement measures to protect captive bears.

* Under the revision of the Wildlife Act (effective January 24, 2025), the ownership, breeding, and reproduction of bears are prohibited, as are the production, consumption, and distribution of bear bile. However, a grace period is granted for existing bear farms, with these provisions applying from January 1, 2026, resulting in a complete ban on bear ownership, farming, breeding, and bear bile extraction by farms as of that date.

After bear imports were permitted in the 1980s to increase farm income, the government, civic groups, farmers, and local governments have, in line with heightened awareness of animal welfare, international standards, and societal demands, pursued a phased phaseout. On January 26, 2022, they reached a social consensus by signing the “Agreement on the Termination of Bear Farming.”

<Roles of each party under the “Agreement on the

Termination of Bear Farming” (January 2022)>

- **(Ministry of Climate, Energy and Environment)** Legalization of the termination of bear farming and the establishment and support of facilities to protect captive bears
- **(Local governments)** Active cooperation in the establishment of captive bear protection facilities within their jurisdictions and installation and operation of such facilities (Seocheon County and Gurye County)
- **(Bear farms)** Safe management of captive bears until they are transferred to protection facilities
- **(Civic groups)** Support to ensure that captive bears can be rescued from farms and transferred to protection facilities

In accordance with the agreement, the MCEE began efforts to legislate a ban on bear farming and to establish public protection facilities. The Wildlife Protection and Management Act was amended to prohibit bear farming and bile extraction, and public protection facilities were opened*, laying the groundwork for the termination of bear farming.

* In September 2025, the Gurye Bear Protection Facility (a local government-run facility with a maximum capacity of 49 bears) was completed and began operations, and 21 purchased captive bears have been transferred there and are currently under protection.

However, to date, only 34 bears have been transferred to protection facilities through purchase negotiations between animal welfare groups and farms, and the purchase of the remaining 199 captive bears has not yet been completed. As negotiations for the remaining bears have been delayed, the MCEE plans to allow a six-month guidance period for penalties and confiscation provisions related to the ban on bear farming, in order to ensure that as many of the remaining bears as possible can be purchased. Even during this period, however, any violations, such as the unauthorized extraction of bear bile, will be dealt with strictly.

Purchased captive bears will be protected by being transferred in stages to the Gurye Bear Protection Facility as capacity is secured, as well as to public and private zoos. Bears for which no facilities are yet available will be temporarily cared for at farms, with improvements made to their living

conditions to enhance animal welfare, and will be transferred in stages as additional private protection facilities become available.

For reference, the Seocheon captive bear protection facility, which had been scheduled for completion in April next year, suffered flood damage due to heavy rainfall in September of this year, delaying its completion, but it is expected to be completed within 2027.

Minister Kim Sunghwan of the MCEE stated, “This implementation plan for the termination of bear farming is a concrete demonstration of our country’s commitment to advancing wildlife welfare while fulfilling our international responsibilities.” He added, “We will continue our efforts to ensure that every last bear is protected.”