

STATES OF JERSEY



FUR PRODUCTS: PETITION (P.72/2006) – COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 30th August 2006
by the Minister for Home Affairs**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Senator is correct in his statement that Customs officers at the ports control the importation and exportation of prohibited or restricted items and this includes CITES goods.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement between signatory States. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. Jersey is a signatory to CITES through the U.K. Government.

In practice CITES provides for controls upon trade in specified animals and plants; it is not a 'blanket' prohibition as proposed. At present in Jersey, Planning and Environment administer the issue of import and export licenses to control the movement of CITES goods into and out of the Island. Some 400 licences are issued annually.

Because CITES has such wide-reaching international acceptance, most CITES goods are imported from or via signatory countries. The risk of items listed by CITES being imported into Jersey without the proper authority is therefore negligible.

To put this into perspective, since 2004 the Customs only detained 8 items suspected of being unlicensed CITES goods and only one of these was confirmed to be on the CITES list and was formally seized. The resource demands of CITES controls upon this Service are not therefore onerous.

A total ban on the importation of fur would not only include clothing but could also include footwear, children's toys, soft furnishings and upholstery as well as various other items. The proposition also includes a prohibition on the re-importation of fur items legally owned and exported by local residents.

Some possible scenarios that will occur should the proposition be accepted are –

- Visitors arrive with clothing that is trimmed or made of fur.
- A visiting dignitary arrives with a high value fur coat.
- A local resident returns from the U.K. with a fur coat that has been owned for many years but may be of sentimental value.
- A household removal includes soft furnishings or items of clothing including fur.
- Clothing lines trimmed with small quantities of fur (rabbit for example) are imported by major local retail establishments.

Any of the aforementioned would give rise to the following which would have to be adequately resourced –

Detection of goods –

- Additional resources will have to be deployed to detect illegal importations.

Seizure of goods –

- Items imported contrary to prohibitions and restrictions can be seized as liable to forfeiture. Seizing extremely high value items can be problematic, raising as it will issues of secure storage. Where claims are made against seizure, Officers will have to prepare the necessary reports and evidence for consideration by Head of Service or where necessary the Royal Court.

Case investigation –

- Additional resources will have to be deployed to investigate illegal importations.

It should be noted that wherever possible Jersey Customs applies a policy of clearly publicizing restrictions that exist upon importations into the Island. Given that this proposed ban would be unique to Jersey considerable resources would have to be expended in publicising the nature of the ban at all ports and airports that serve the

Island.

Moreover an educational plan aimed at developing awareness of the import ban would need to be rolled out throughout clothing retailers, furnishing stores and toy shops in order to help make the ban effective.

The Jersey Customs and Immigration Service commit resources on an intelligence and analysed risk basis in order to maximize effectiveness. Current priorities include the protection of the Revenue and the protection of our borders against the importation of controlled drugs and illegal immigrants.

Identifying items made of fur (and establishing that the items are made of fur and not a man made product) at importation would be impossible with existing resources without a change in our current priorities and working practices.

Within Customs' current priorities it is estimated that even an attempt to effectively police such a prohibition on the importation of fur would require one extra customs officer per shift on duty at the airport, harbour and post office. This equates to a total of three extra staff – one extra officer for each of the anti-smuggling teams – at a cost of almost £170,000 a year.