



**Trans-atlantic
Traders Europe
Ltd.**

SEA CUCUMBER PROFILES



IDENTIFYING SEA CUCUMBERS:

IMPLEMENTING AND ENFORCING AN APPENDIX II LISTING OF TEATFISH

INTRODUCTION

Sea cucumbers, or bêche-de-mer (the dried product), are a luxury good classified as one of the eight culinary treasures of the sea. On the international market, sea cucumbers can be sold at prices ranging from USD \$145-389 per kg, an increase of 16.6% from 2011–2016. While demand for sea cucumbers remains high, stocks of some wild populations have dropped significantly. Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) have proposed the white teatfish (*Holothuria fuscogilva*), and the two black teatfishes (*Holothuria nobilis* and *Holothuria whitmaei*) for listing in Appendix II at the 18th CITES Conference of Parties (CoP18). With population declines from 50-90%, not only are these species in need of international trade management to ensure continued trade is sustainably sourced, but they are also easily identifiable from other sea cucumber species - meaning CITES Parties can easily and effectively implement this potential listing.

Sea cucumbers are bottom-dwelling species, residing along coral reefs and in association with seagrasses almost globally. Moving slowly across the ocean floor, sea cucumbers consume, among other things, fine organic matter and sand. Doing so ensures that nutrients are cycled back into the ecosystem, as well as the mixing of oxygen into the substrate - essential functions that provide the backbone of healthy marine ecosystems. Out of 1,200 known sea cucumber species, only approximately 70 species are found in the international trade. Of those found in trade, *H. fuscogilva*, *H. nobilis*, and *H. whitmaei* are among the most desirable and high value. While they are also consumed locally, trade in these species has steadily increased over the past 25 years. Growing demand and limited fisheries management has resulted in widespread population declines. Compounding the effects of unmanaged growth in catch and trade is the widespread loss of coral reefs globally. The additional pressure from this habitat loss - which is predicted to continue - exacerbates the effects of rampant overexploitation.

All species of sea cucumbers proposed for listing on CITES can be visually identified in both wet and dry form, allowing Parties to effectively implement these listings at little to no additional cost

Teatfish are generally visually identifiable and traders in Hong Kong, SAR are easily able to sort them by species when selling them (see photo below, with teatfish separated in the buckets at the bottom). While the three proposed species look very similar to each other, they are very easy to distinguish from other, non-teatfish species.

The guidelines on the next page offer a few succinct steps that customs and enforcement officers can use to identify whether a shipment of sea cucumbers likely includes teatfish - giving them probable cause to hold the shipment for further inspection and testing.



DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN THE DORSAL AND VENTRAL SURFACES OF A DRIED SEA CUCUMBER



Dorsal / upper surface
Steve W. Purcell



Ventral / lower surface
Steve W. Purcell

The dorsal and ventral surfaces of a dried sea cucumber can be easily and quickly identified. The dorsal surface is rounded and smooth, when compared with the slightly concave and textured bottom surface of the animal.

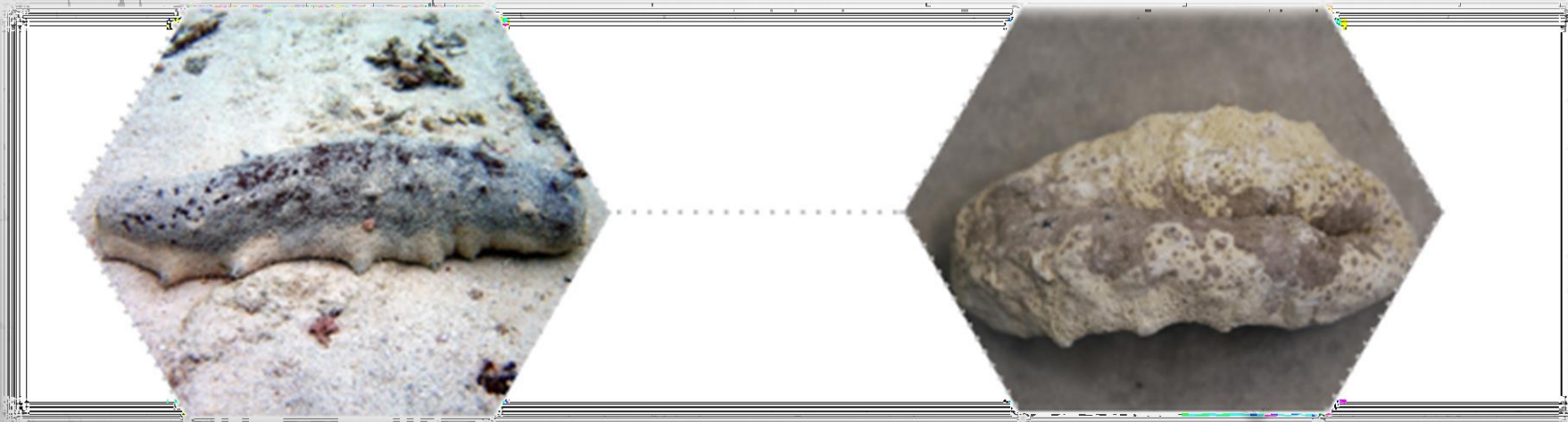
IDENTIFICATION FLOWCHART



SPECIES PROFILES

White teatfish (*Holothuria fuscogilva*)

- Stout shape with obvious teats that are white compared to the rest of the animal
- Teats tend to be relatively long compared to black teatfish, and more pointed
- Body surface is smooth to slightly wrinkled
- When dried, usually a single cut on upper side of animal
- Lighter brown dorsal surface and ventral surface that is tan or brown colored



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Stan Shea

Black teatfish (*Holothuria nobilis*)

- Stout shape
- Powdery grey surface with black skin underneath
- Only slightly wrinkled with obvious teats, generally rounded
- When dried, is usually cut along the upper surface of animal



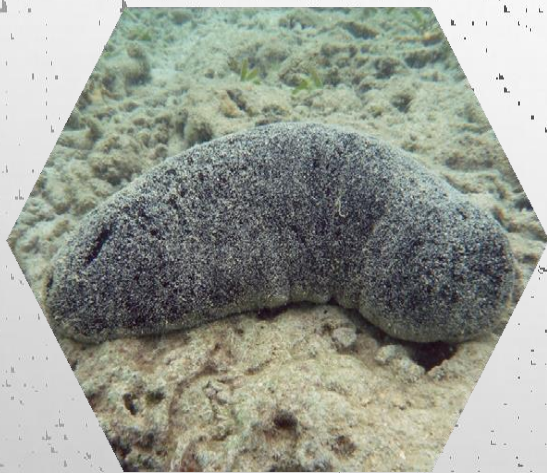
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Black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmaei*)

- Flattened stout to somewhat elongated shape
- Powdery grey surface, sometimes with black markings
- Smooth or slightly wrinkled with obvious teats, not very long, and sometimes rounded
- When dried, usually has a single cut on upper side of animal



Steve W. Purcell



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SEA CUCUMBER (SAND FISH)

40 PCS PER KG		
60 PCS PER KG		
80 PCS PER KG		
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:- SRI LANKA WORLD NO ONE SEA CUCUMBER		



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