

## Sri Lanka cracks down on owners of elephants taken from the wild

By Krishan Francis and  
Bharatha Mallawarachi  
The Associated Press

**C**OLOMBO, Sri Lanka — In Sri Lanka, an elephant in the backyard has long been a sign of wealth, privilege, and power. But these days it may also be a sign that someone is breaking the law.

Capturing wild elephants has been banned for decades. Registration records indicate there should be only 127 elephants in captivity, most of them older. Yet they are a staple of the South Asian island nation's 400 or so yearly processions — traditional ceremonies honoring a marriage, calling for peace, or praying for rain — and in each there are always a few young elephants clumsily cantering to keep up.

"In Sri Lanka, people measure the success of the processions by the number of elephants," said the Rev. Magalkande Sudantha, a Buddhist monk.

Despite concerns that the animals may be abused, spectators always expect a parade of elephants wearing jangling ornaments, and babies are a special attraction.

"There is no beauty in processions without elephants," said Janaka Alwis, a 48-year-old city council employee in Gampaha, north of Colombo. "People go to watch because of the elephants, and to count them."

Aware of the ongoing elephant racket, authorities have been cracking down. In the last two years, the government has confiscated 39 elephants whose owners produced either false permits or none at all. Some had paid as much as \$200,000 per captured animal when a previous government was in office, according to wildlife minister Gamini Jayawickrama Perera.

Those facing prosecution for illegally keeping elephants include one judge and a Buddhist monk. Police are also considering charges against people suspected of rounding



**BREAKING THE LAW?** A Sri Lankan mahout attempts to measure the height of his tamed elephant in the backyard of his home in Baduraliya, a village outside Colombo, Sri Lanka, in this July 5, 2016 file photo. Even as the country cracks down on illegal ownership, the enduring demand for elephants has the government planning to set up its own pool of captive animals to be hired out to temples for ceremonies and maintained with budget funds. For Buddhists, who make up 70 percent of the island's 20 million population, elephants are believed to have been a servant of the Buddha and even a previous incarnation of the holy man himself. (AP Photo/Eranga Jayawardena, File)

up wild elephants for profit.

The practice of taming wild elephants includes starving, beating, and scaring them into submission, while keeping them chained up at all times, conservationists say.

"Taming a wild elephant is an extremely cruel experience for the animal," said Prithviraj Fernando, who runs the Center for Conservation and Research in Sri Lanka. "Whether it's a temple or a private person, that's how it is done."

The Sri Lankan elephant is one of three subspecies of Asian elephant and is found only on the teardrop-shaped Indian Ocean island. In the 19th century, there were believed to be up to 14,000. That number fell to fewer than 3,000 before hunting and capture were banned. But while the population has grown since then to nearly 6,000, according to the island's first official elephant census in 2011, they are still considered endangered and under threat from habitat loss and degradation. They are confined to small, isolated pockets of jungle and pasture in the north and the east.

For Buddhists, who make up 70

percent of the island's 20 million population, elephants are believed to have been servants of the Buddha and even a previous incarnation of the holy man himself. Sinhalese kings rode elephants into battle. And every year, colorfully decorated tuskers carry an ornate box containing a replica of one of the Buddha's teeth.

"The elephants carrying sacred relics are very fortunate. Even we don't have that opportunity," said housewife Kanthi Sriyalatha, 53. She said the sight of the animals is also a thrill. "Children wait in anticipation to watch processions because they want to see the elephants."

Conservationists said that, given the importance given to using elephants in religious ceremonies, the government should be stepping in to manage their care while ensuring no more are captured in the wild.

"We need to impose some restrictions on ourselves. There are about 30,000 Buddhist temples," Fernando said. "If every temple wants to have a procession with an elephant, it is not

*Continued on page 13*



**UNPALATABLE NAME.** A worker packs a Pretzel Dog at Auntie Anne's at a shopping mall in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Hot dogs, or at least the name, will soon be off the menu for a U.S. fast-food chain selling the popular snack in Malaysia. The chain, Auntie Anne's, has been told by Islamic authorities that its popular Pretzel Dog, which contains no dog meat, has to be renamed because it is confusing to Muslim consumers. (AP Photo/Vincent Thian)

### U.S. fast-food chain in Malaysia told to change hot dog name

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Hot dogs, or at least the name, will soon be off the menu for a U.S. fast-food chain selling the popular snack in Malaysia.

The chain, Auntie Anne's, has been told by Islamic authorities that its popular Pretzel Dog, which contains no dog meat, has to be renamed as it is confusing for Muslim consumers.

The Malaysian Islamic Development Department has told the U.S. company to banish the word "dog" from its menu and suggested that the frankfurter wrapped in a pretzel be called Pretzel Sausage as part of conditions to obtain halal certification based on Islamic dietary laws. Dogs are deemed unclean in Islam.

"It is more appropriate to use the name Pretzel Sausage," the department's halal director, Sirajuddin Suhaimie, told local media.

The move is not surprising in mainly Muslim Malaysia, where conservative attitudes have been on the rise. A wide range of products have been certified halal, from mineral water to a newly launched internet browser and household products to appeal to Muslims, who make up about 60 percent of the country's 30 million people.

Auntie Anne's said it will comply with the request. Its halal executive, Farhatul Kamilah, said on her Facebook page that the chain has proposed several new names and was waiting for the Islamic department's approval.

Other food outlets selling hot dogs face similar rules. U.S. fast-food chain A&W earlier obtained its halal certification in Malaysia. In return, its famous root beer is simply called RB on its menu and hot dogs are coney dogs and franks, short for frankfurters.

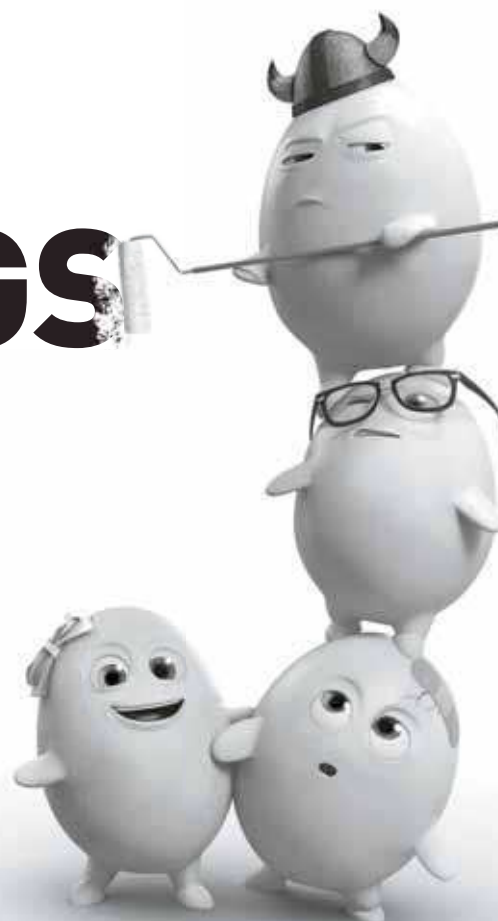
# If you smell ROTTEN EGGS it could be a gas leak.

And the best thing to do is leave your home and call  
NW Natural. We'll be out to make sure everything is safe.

Unsure of what to do? Just take a look at our tips to the right.

Smell. Go. Let Us Know.

**800-882-3377**



#### How to identify a possible gas leak.

If you smell a rotten egg or sulfur odor, you hear a blowing or hissing sound, or you see blowing dirt, it could be a gas leak.

#### What to do.

Leave your home and the area immediately. Don't use any electrical device such as a light switch, telephone, appliance or garage door opener. And don't try to find the leak yourself.

#### Who to call.

Go outside and use your cell phone, or a neighbor's phone, and call **NW Natural** at **800-882-3377**.



**NW Natural®**