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## 200 leopard skins seized

More than 200 rare clouded leopard skins were seized by Agriculture and Fisheries Department officers while investigating consignments in a Kowloon godown.

The untreated skins, totalling 220, are worth about \$150,000.

However, a department official said that once dressed their value would jump considerably.

The seizure was made on Monday and a file is expected to be sent to the Legal Department soon for possible prosecution under the Animals and Plants (Protection

of Endangered Species) Ordinance.

The official said the skins had been inside the godown for the past three weeks after arriving here by ship.

He added that the clouded leopards had only recently been killed.

It is believed that departmental officers became suspicious after it was found that the accompanying shipping documents did not fully indicate the contents of the consignment.

The official explained that the clouded leopard, which has no spots, is rarer than the

ordinary leopard, being found only in the Southeast Asian areas from Nepal to Indonesia, including some parts of China.

"The animal has become an endangered species because of its continual exploitation for the garment trade.

"It is nocturnal, lives in trees and measures up to one metre in length — a bit smaller than the normal leopard," he said.

During the past six months the Agriculture and Fisheries Department has seized an estimated 1,200 animal skins under the ordi-

nance.

These include the 300 cheetah skins confiscated late last year, 560 genet (a small African cat) skins, 90 peludos (a South American spotted cat), 31 ordinary leopard skins and a number of seizures from passengers arriving at Kai Tak airport.

Of these skins, five were tigers, two were leopards and one was a clouded leopard.

Meanwhile, the department announced yesterday that import licences for rhinoceros horns, their parts or derivatives, will no longer be issued.