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A foot-long Tokay Gecko with its eye-catching colours.

Gecko rumoured can cure AIDS

Chok Sim Yee

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KOTA KINABALU: Kota Kinabalu is facing a shortage of live crickets due to the sudden trend in rearing Tokay Gecko, believed to be a cure for AIDS.

The trend to rear Tokay Gecko started when a 64kg carnivore found in the jungles of Sabah was sold for RM64 million to an Indonesian man.

It was rumoured that the internal organs of the gecko could cure asthma, skin diseases and mental illnesses.

China and Thailand were also said to be researching the cure for AIDS using gecko tongue.

Chang Aquarium Tropical Fish director Chang Sai Mun said the trend started in Tawau and soon spread to Kota Kinabalu around a month ago.

He explained that the price of the gecko depended on its size. It could fetch from

several hundred ringgit up to several thousands, with some saying it could be sold for tens of thousands.

“According to what is being said in the market, the gecko must be reared till 300 grams and above to achieve market value.”

Chang said the gecko’s main source of food was cricket, and this caused a sudden soar in the demand for live crickets in many pet shops and aquariums.

He added that live crickets, sold at 10 sen each, were usually used to feed fish and birds, and had never faced any shortage.

“The supplier delivers the crickets every Monday, Wednesday and Friday to our aquarium, and customers are always seen lining up for the crickets till outside the shop.

“As soon as the supplier brought in 2,000 crickets, they would be sold out in a mere 20 minutes,” he added.

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Geckos cause demand for crickets to soar

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In order to allow every customer to get a share of the crickets, each customer is limited to RM5 per purchase, or equivalent to 40 crickets.

A lady customer who was seen asking for crickets at

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an aquarium in Tanjung Aru, said she had searched for live crickets from Inanam to Tanjung Aru for her son's lizard and scorpion, but to no avail. She also tried to make a reservation with the owner of the aquarium, but was told to come back

today as the owner was also uncertain about his supply. Meanwhile, a man who reared Tokay Gecko, said his pet had a huge appetite and could eat up to 10 crickets a day. However, due to the shortage of crickets, he

substituted live crickets with other food such as worms, cockroaches and bread. Asked what he thought about the medical benefits of Tokay Gecko, he said he had yet to hear confirmation from the official authorities.