



## WSAVA POSITION STATEMENT ON THE DOG AND CAT MEAT TRADE

The farming and trade of dogs and cats for human consumption are arguably amongst the most significant and contentious of contemporary companion animal welfare issues, particularly in areas of Asia and Africa.

An estimated 25-30 million dogs and an unknown number of cats enter this meat trade annually.<sup>1,2</sup> Dogs and cats may be stolen (or purchased) from their owners, taken from the streets, or sourced from farms. These animals are frequently transported long distances and then inhumanely slaughtered. Investigations have documented the severe cruelty inherent in all stages of the dog meat trade including sourcing, transport, sale, and slaughter.<sup>1-3</sup>

The [World Small Animal Veterinary Association](#) (WSAVA) believes that dogs and cats are sentient beings and have the capacity to suffer. Whenever animals are under human care, their welfare must be ensured and their suffering prevented in every possible manner. We should always strive to ensure that the Five Freedoms<sup>4</sup> are met:

1. **Freedom from hunger or thirst** by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
2. **Freedom from discomfort** by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. **Freedom from pain, injury or disease** by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. **Freedom to express normal behaviour** by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
5. **Freedom from fear and distress** by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

The dog and cat meat trade encourages the mass and unregulated movement of unvaccinated companion animals both domestically and internationally. There is mounting qualitative and quantitative evidence documenting the public health risk the trade poses, in addition to compromising regional rabies control efforts.<sup>5</sup> The trade, slaughter and consumption of dogs poses a risk to human health in the form of disease transmission, notably from rabies,<sup>6</sup> but also from cholera and trichinellosis.<sup>7,8</sup> Studies have revealed substantial incidences of rabies-

infected canine tissue in restaurants, slaughterhouses, and markets in areas where dog meat is prepared and sold.<sup>9,10</sup>

Additionally, antimicrobial and other pharmaceutical / chemical residues are significant issues in dog meat.<sup>11</sup> Dog meat rarely falls under food-hygiene or meat-sanitation laws and is not subject to controls at source nor testing before human consumption. This is therefore a veterinary public health concern, as well as a potential antimicrobial resistance issue.

The WSAVA is sensitive to cultural variances and recognises that, while in western societies the consumption of dog or cat meat may be considered unacceptable, for other societies the consumption of dog or cat meat has not only economic but cultural and traditional significance.<sup>12</sup> However, due to the many animal welfare and public health concerns, the WSAVA strongly discourages the consumption of and trade in dog and cat meat. Instead, it encourages rigorous enforcement of existing laws and supports new controls and regulations where current legislation does not exist aimed at banning what is typically an inhumane and dangerous practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Czajkowski, C.. **Dog meat trade in South Korea: A report on the current state of the trade and efforts to eliminate it.** *Animal Law*, 2014 21:29–63

<sup>2</sup> Humane Society International. **Dog Meat Trade.** [http://www.hsi.org/issues/dog\\_meat/](http://www.hsi.org/issues/dog_meat/) Accessed Sept 3 2017

<sup>3</sup> The Guardian. **Illegal wildlife trade: Dog-meat mafia fuels Thailand's canine trade – video.** <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/video/2013/may/20/dog-meat-mafia-thailand-video>.

Accessed April 3 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Farm Animal Welfare Council / Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. **Five Freedoms.** <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121010012427/http://www.fawc.org.uk/freedoms.htm>

Accessed Sept 3 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Ekanem, E.E., Eyong, K.I., Philip-Ephraim, E.E., Eyong, M.E., Adams, E.B. and Asindi, A.A. **Stray dog trade fuelled by dog meat consumption as a risk factor for rabies infection in Calabar, southern Nigeria.** *African Health Sci.* 2013 Dec;13(4):1170-3. doi: 10.4314/ahs.v13i4.44.

<sup>6</sup> Wertheim, H.F., Nguyen, T.Q., Nguyen, K.A.T., de Jong, M.D., Taylor, W.R., Le, T.V., Nguyen, H.H., Nguyen, H.T., Farrar, J., Horby, P. and Nguyen, H.D. **Furious rabies after an atypical exposure.** *PLoS Med.* 2009 Mar 17;6(3):e44. doi: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1000044

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<sup>8</sup> Cui, J. and Wang, Z.Q. **Outbreaks of human trichinellosis caused by consumption of dog meat in China.** *Parasite.* 2001 Jun;8(2 Suppl):S74-7.

<sup>9</sup> Mshelbwala, P.P., Ogunkoya, A.B. and Maikai, B.V. **Detection of rabies antigen in the saliva and brains of apparently healthy dogs slaughtered for human consumption and its public health implications in Abia State, Nigeria.** *ISRN Vet Sci.* 2013 Dec 12;2013:468043. doi: 10.1155/2013/468043. eCollection 2013

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<sup>11</sup> Lee, H.W. **Dog Meat Production in Asia.** *Global Seminar on Animal Welfare. Proceedings: 33rd World Veterinary Congress.* 2017:639-640

<sup>12</sup> Cawthorn, D-M., Hoffman, L.C.. **Controversial cuisine: A global account of the demand, supply and acceptance of “unconventional” and “exotic” meats** *Meat Sci.* 2016 Oct;120:19-36. doi: 10.1016/j.meatsci.2016.04.017. Epub 2016 Apr 21.