



## Press Information

13 September 2017

### **WSAVA Expresses Opposition to Dog and Cat Meat Trade in New Position Statement**

The [World Small Animal Veterinary Association](#) (WSAVA) has strongly expressed its opposition to the dog and cat meat trade in a new position statement.

Prepared by members of its Animal Wellness and Welfare Committee (AWWC), the Position Statement recognizes cultural variance on this issue but voices strong concerns about the welfare of dogs and cats at all stages of the meat trade. It also highlights mounting qualitative and quantitative evidence documenting the public health risks the trade poses in terms of compromising regional rabies control efforts and increasing the risk of disease transmission.

The statement concludes by calling for the 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.

Co-chair of the AWWC, Dr. Shane Ryan said: "WSAVA's member associations are vital in highlighting animal welfare issues in their region. They work with the appropriate government or regulatory bodies to resolve gaps or short-comings in any system that has detrimental outcomes on animal welfare.

"We understand there are cultural sensitivities around this issue but, as an association focused on advancing standards of companion animal health and welfare, it is important for us to make a very clear statement of our position on the dog and cat meat trade. We have serious concerns, not only about the welfare of the animals involved but, also about the potential health risks to the people who consume the meat. We are committed to working with our members, with veterinary professionals and with all other stakeholders to achieve positive change through education and consensus-building."

The AWWC is developing the world's first Global Welfare Guidelines for Companion Animal Practitioners, due to be launched at the WSAVA World Congress in Singapore in 2018. The guidelines

will provide animal welfare advice and direction for veterinarians through all stages of the companion animal-veterinary interaction. WSAVA will promote awareness of the guidelines and encourage their adoption as widely as possible.

WSAVA represents more than 200,000 veterinarians worldwide through its 101 member associations and is focused on enhancing the clinical care and welfare of all companion animals. Its core activities include the development of WSAVA Global Guidelines in key areas of veterinary practice. These guidelines aim to support veterinarians by setting standards of care and recommendations for best practice. Vaccination, nutrition, pain management and veterinary dentistry are already served by WSAVA Guidelines.

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## **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>i,ii</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>i-iii</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>iv</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>v</sup> The trade, slaughter and consumption of dogs poses a risk to human health in the form of disease transmission, notably from rabies,<sup>vi</sup> but also from cholera and trichinellosis.<sup>vii,viii</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>ix,x</sup>

Additionally, antimicrobial and other pharmaceutical / chemical residues are significant issues in dog meat.<sup>xi</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>xii</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>i</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>ii</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>iii</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>iv</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>v</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>vi</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

<sup>vii</sup> Anh, D.D., Lopez, A.L., Thiem, V.D., Grahek, S.L., Duong, T.N., Park, J.K., Kwon, H.J., Favorov, M., Hien, N.T. and Clemens, J.D. **Use of oral cholera vaccines in an outbreak in Vietnam: a case control study.** *PLoS Negl Trop Dis.* 2011 Jan 25;5(1):e1006. doi: 10.1371/journal.pntd.0001006.

<sup>viii</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>ix</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

<sup>x</sup> Song, M., Tang, Q., Wang, D.M., Mo, Z.J., Guo, S.H., Li, H., Tao, X.Y., Rupprecht, C.E., Feng, Z.J. and Liang, G.D. **Epidemiological investigations of human rabies in China.** *BMC Infect Dis.* 2009 Dec 21;9:210. doi: 10.1186/1471-2334-9-210.

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

<sup>xii</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.