



Dog Meat Trade Cambodia 2019

Key findings of Investigations in Siem Reap



Contents

Executive summary	1
1. Operations of the trade	4
1.1 Sourcing	4
1.2 Slaughter	4
1.3 Dog meat sales and trading networks	6
1.4 Profitability	8
2. Consumers	9
3. International reputation and tourism	9
4. Rabies and other public health risks	9
5. A proposed collaborative and solution-based approach	11
6. Recommendations	13



Executive summary



About FOUR PAWS

FOUR PAWS is an international animal welfare organisation with headquarters in Vienna, Austria. Founded by Heli Dungler in 1988, the organization strives to help animals in need with sustainable campaigns and projects. The vision of FOUR PAWS is a world where humans treat animals with respect, empathy and understanding. FOUR PAWS is the strong, global and independent voice for animals under human control by:

- Creating sustainable solutions for animals in need
- Touching hearts and changing consumer behaviour
- Driving legal change
- Building powerful partnerships

FOUR PAWS focuses on animals that are directly under human influence such as stray animals, farm animals, companion animals and wild animals including bears, big cats, and orangutans kept in inappropriate conditions.

As an international animal welfare organisation, the work of FOUR PAWS is not bound by any geographic limits. The organisation has offices in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Kosovo, the Netherlands, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine, United Kingdom, USA and Vietnam. The national and international aid projects provide fast and direct assistance for animals in need and wild animals kept in poor conditions receive a new species-appropriate home. The work of FOUR PAWS is based on substantiated research and scientific expertise as well as intensive national and international lobbying. The goal of the campaigns, projects and educational work is to inform the general public about animal suffering and bring about long-term improvements – enshrined in legislation.



About Animal Rescue Cambodia

Founded in 2016, Animal Rescue Cambodia (ARC) is a local non-profit organization with the mission to create sustainable animal welfare in Cambodia. Headquartered in the capital city of Phnom Penh, the organization is committed to creating sustainable and long-lasting change in Cambodia through:

1. Humane animal overpopulation control, increased animal health, care & refuge for animals in need
2. Inspiring human behavior-change & emergency response assistance
3. Improving the quality of veterinary care
4. Supporting the implementation of animal welfare legislation

Changing human behavior is the key to ARC's strategy, as it is the only way to truly improve the future of Cambodian street animals. Local projects include HQHVSN programs for dogs and cats of disadvantaged groups, a mass rabies surveillance and education program, and more.

Website: <https://ar-cambodia.com> | Facebook: www.facebook.com/animalrescuecambodia

Institutional arrangements

In Cambodia, FOUR PAWS and Animal Rescue Cambodia have a Memorandum of Understanding with the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) to combat the cruel dog meat trade, signed in December 2018. In July 2019, FOUR PAWS, ARC, and CMAC held a workshop titled, 'Hero Dogs' in Phnom Penh which celebrated the important role dogs play in Khmer society, and the threat that the dog meat trade poses.

Tackling the dog meat trade

FOUR PAWS and ARC are committed to working in collaboration with the Siem Reap and national government to tackle the dog meat trade and propose a collaborative action plan. Such a plan involves public awareness activities coupled with action to close slaughterhouses and restaurants and stop the trading of dogs for meat, while providing on-the-ground support and assistance. Both organizations are well-positioned to assist the government with an effective and positive city-wide campaign to tackle the activities associated with the dog meat trade and celebrate dogs as companions, not food. Based on our many years of experience working on this issue throughout Southeast Asia, we can provide authorities with the expertise, support and resources needed to tackle such a complex and emotive issue.

Top level investigation findings

From December 2018 – May 2019, FOUR PAWS and ARC conducted in-depth investigations into the dog meat trade in Cambodia, focusing on areas where dogs are sourced, slaughtered, and sold. Siem Reap province was identified as a key 'hot spot' for dog sourcing, supplying the demand for dog meat in the Eastern half of the country, most notably Phnom Penh. The investigation revealed that the dog meat trade in Siem Reap province is of considerable magnitude, involving upwards of 7,000 dogs per month. At the time of the investigation, there were 21 active restaurants specializing in dog meat in and around Siem Reap, selling between 4-6 dogs per day depending on the season. An estimated 2,900 dogs per month (34,800 dogs per year)

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are served at restaurants in the city of Siem Reap alone. The investigation also identified 1 dedicated dog slaughterhouse, and 5 high volume holding/trading areas located outside of the city that are used to house dogs prior to being transported for slaughter. Specialized minivans equipped with cages are used to export at least 3,750 dogs per month out of Siem Reap and across the country to supply dog meat restaurants in Phnom Penh, via slaughterhouses in Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, and Skun.

Slaughterhouses, holding areas, and dog meat restaurants in Siem Reap province are driving the theft and trade in dogs from surrounding provinces, given that some of these dogs are stolen pets. This mass and unregulated trade encourages dog theft, and the large-scale movement of dogs of unknown disease and vaccination status into other cities throughout Cambodia. This is of particularly grave concern given that rabies is highly endemic throughout Cambodia, and dogs that are potentially rabies-infected are entering the trade for human consumption. The catching, slaughter and consumption of dog meat jeopardises the health and safety of the entire Kingdom with significant societal, economic and animal welfare impacts.



The dog meat trade also has the potential to negatively influence Siem Reap’s international reputation as a highly sought-after tourist destination, particularly given the proximity of many dog meat trade restaurants to Angkor Wat.

Our investigations have documented and captured extensive footage of the collection, transport, and the cruel slaughter methods used; as well as detailed interviews with those involved in the trade. In addition to the investigation, a market research study was also performed to assess the prevalence of dog meat consumption, and attitudes. The study revealed that most Cambodians consider dog meat consumption as sinful, and goes against Khmer culture and traditions.

Public health risk & illegality

Facilities slaughtering dogs in Siem Reap province do not meet basic hygiene standards and operate illegally. The transport, slaughter, and sale of dog meat is in violation of the Law on Animal Health and Production and sub-decree 108 on Control of Slaughterhouse and Slaughtering Business and Primary Animal Product Processing Premises.

The dog meat trade poses a significant public health risk, most notably due to rabies. Like other countries in the ASEAN Plus Three group, Cambodia has pledged to eradicate canine rabies by 2030, but it faces a number of obstacles. There is currently no formal canine vaccination program, no official strategy, a rampant dog meat trade, and insufficient funding dedicated to eradicating canine rabies in Cambodia. Given that the dog meat trade poses a rabies risk to those catching, slaughtering, and eating dogs and to international tourists, eradicating the dog meat trade coupled with dog vaccination programs is one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce human rabies cases.

The transport, slaughter, and sale of dog meat is also in violation of the Law on Animal Health and Production

Opportunity for collaboration

In October, FOUR PAWS will be launching an international campaign to tackle the illegal dog meat trade on the grounds of its extreme animal cruelty, the risks it poses to public health and safety in the form of rabies transmission, and potential negative effect on tourism. In collaboration with the Siem Reap government, FOUR PAWS and ARC would like to realize the dual aims of eliminating the dog meat trade and protecting public health.

1 Operations of the trade

1.1 Sourcing of the dogs

The majority of dogs supplying the dog meat trade are stray or pet dogs collected or stolen by traders. The collection process is brutal, with dogs often beaten over the head into submission. Dogs frequently suffer from broken bones, wounds, and other injuries while they are being caught. Some die from their injuries sustained during the capture process, before they are even slaughtered. At one slaughterhouse in Kandal province, we observed a dog with his lower jaw completely fractured. This dog had arrived the day before, from Siem Reap. Frequently visiting poor and rural areas, traders exchange cookware such as pots and



pans, or trade puppies for adult dogs. Some dogs are stolen, particularly from pagodas.

The majority of dogs killed or traded in Siem Reap are originally sourced from areas near the Thai-Cambodian border. There is an extensive trading network along this border, and many traders report travelling hundreds of kilometres outside of Siem Reap to collect dogs. Poipet is commonly cited as a popular area for the illegal trading of dogs from Thailand.

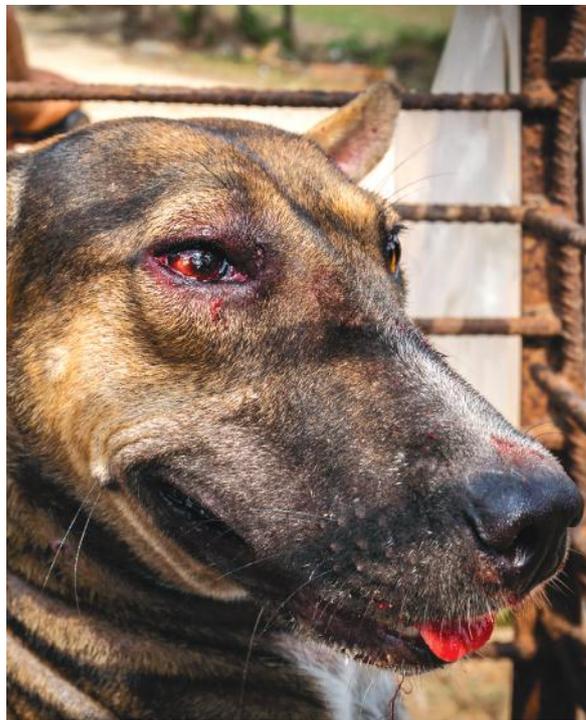
1.2 Slaughter methods

During the investigation, a variety of slaughtering methods were observed. All were crude, inhumane, and caused prolonged suffering. The areas in which slaughtering took place were unhygienic, and dogs were killed in full view of other dogs. The most commonly observed slaughtering methods included:

- Clubbing on the head several times and cutting the neck with a knife. Dogs were then hung upside down or placed on their side until they bled out. This caused a long and painful death for the dog. From the time of the first hit on the head until the dog actually died was up to 15 minutes.
- Drowning is a popular method of killing several dogs at once. Interviewees reported drowning dogs in a nearby river or cement tank. Dogs were packed tightly in small metal cages which were lowered into a pit of filthy, black stagnant water. This causes prolonged agony as dogs struggle for air.
- For dogs transported from Siem Reap to Kandal province to supply dog meat restaurants in Phnom Penh, almost all are subject to mass drowning.
- Individual dogs were strangled to death using a rope pulled tight around their necks. When done while still in a cage, dogs would break their teeth off biting the bars of the cage or catching pole trying to get free from the noose. In other instances, dogs were hung from a tree with a rope around their neck for up to 30 minutes until they died.



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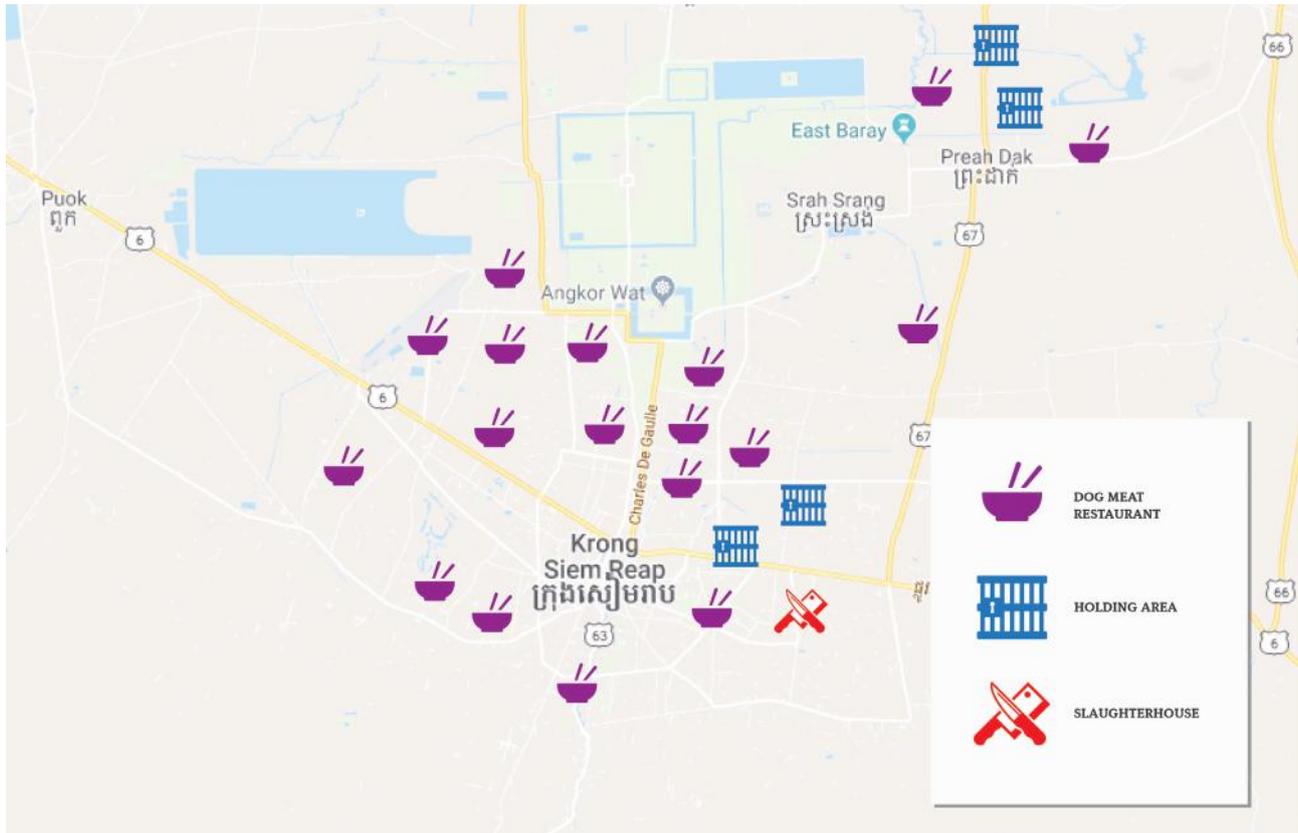


Unfortunately, many dogs were still alive during this process

Following slaughter, dogs were plunged into hot water to remove their fur using a knife. Unfortunately, many dogs were still alive during this process.

1.3 Dog meat sales and trading networks

Restaurants



During the investigations, a total of 21 restaurants actively selling dog meat were visited in the Siem Reap city area. The restaurants visited were clearly visible, marked as dog meat restaurants, or referred to us by members of the community. Several restaurants were located surprisingly close to Angkor Wat. One restaurant, located outside the West entrance (near Ta Prohm Kel Temple), was only 570 meters from the Angkor Wat gateway. There were 8 restaurants recorded within a 5-kilometer radius of Angkor Wat temples.

The majority of restaurants were supplied by dog meat suppliers in Preah Dak, Banteay Samre, Tram Neak, Khnar Thmei. On average, restaurants sell between 4-6 dogs per day depending on the season. Most source pre-killed dogs from a supplier and only a few restaurants report killing dogs on-site. The practice of killing of dogs by the restaurant owners themselves as opposed to buying killed dogs from a supplier increases the profit margin.

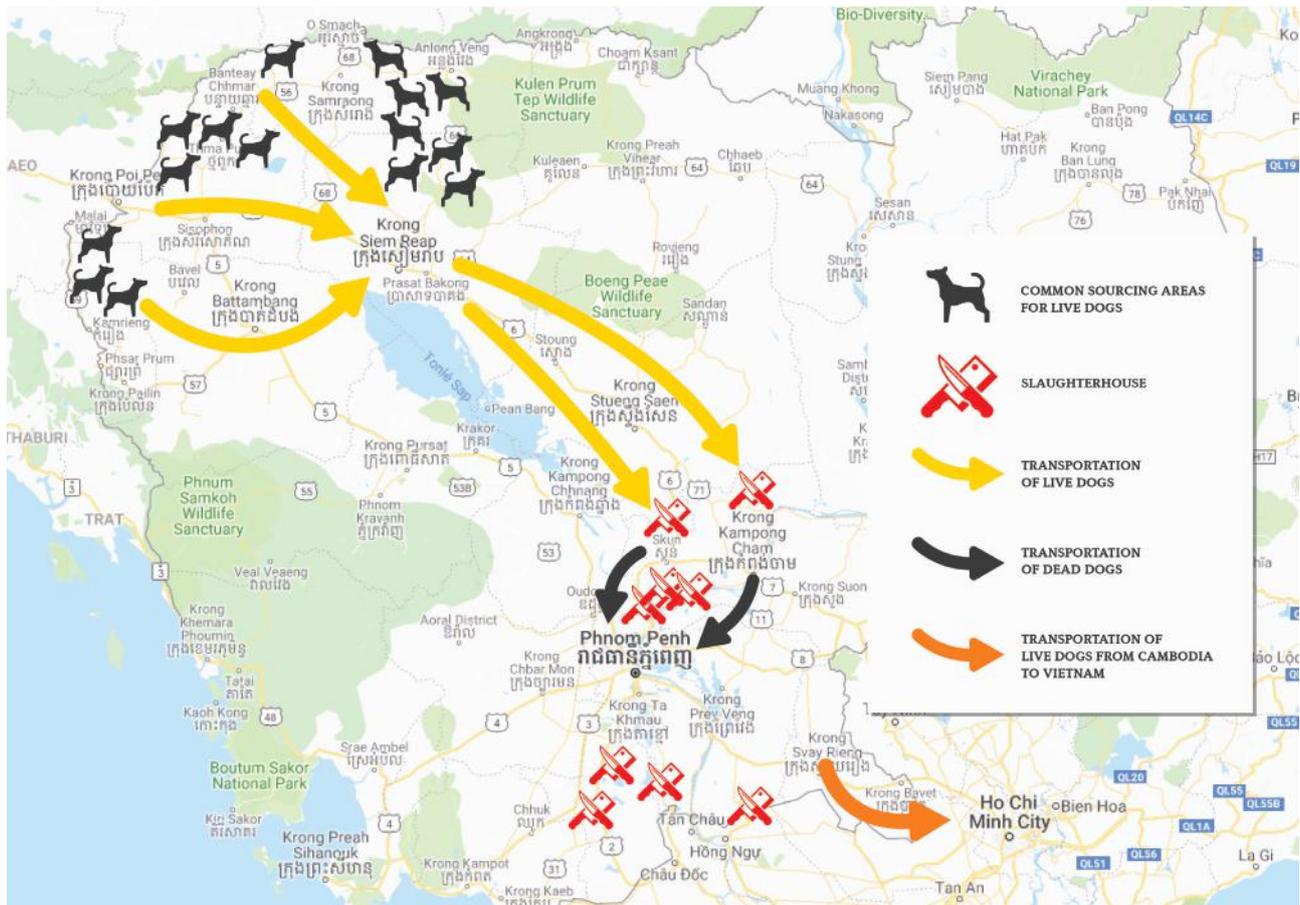


At dog meat restaurants, grilled dog meat was the most common preparation, followed by a sour soup and curry. Offal and organ meat including the stomach stuffed with rice and herbs was also eaten. The tail is also considered a delicacy, served grilled. Dog heads with the brain still inside were also served grilled.

Slaughterhouses

There was one smaller slaughterhouse dedicated solely to killing dogs and providing dog meat to restaurants in Siem Reap. There were other holding areas that also slaughtered dogs on a smaller scale; most were killed by hanging. These facilities were located in Preah Dak, Tram Neak and Khnar Thmei villages. Besides slaughtering small numbers of dogs, villages also supply live dogs to Phnom Penh, via Kampong Cham. Most restaurants in Siem Reap reported that due to noise complaints from neighbours, most sourced pre-killed dogs from slaughterhouses outside Siem Reap city limits.

Holding areas and trafficking routes



Traders used a motorbike with a cage attached for sourcing dogs from surrounding provinces either purchasing the dogs, capturing them from the streets or stealing pet dogs. They drive hundreds of kilometers to collect dogs each day, which are then delivered to holding areas. Dogs may spend many hours cramped in a cage with other dogs on the motorbike, until the trader is able to fill his cage.

The dog meat business in Siem Reap and surrounding areas is a popular way to earn money. In Tram Neak and Khnar Thmei, the entire villages are involved in the dog meat trade. Tram Neak is home to one of the larger dog holding/trading posts, where one collector reported profits of up to \$1500 per month. At this particular location, hundreds of trafficked dogs transit through every week, and between 10-15 families are involved in the business. Puppies as young as 3 months old are held in cages, waiting to be shipped for slaughter. At the holding areas, dogs are typically kept in metal cages elevated off the ground, and kept for many days with no food or little water. Most dogs appeared terrified, trembling in fear.



From the holding area, traffickers used minivans retrofitted with cages inside to regularly transport hundreds of live dogs from Siem Reap to slaughterhouses in Kampong Cham, Kandal, and Skun. The investigation found minivans filled with dogs arriving at slaughterhouses in Kandal Province and Kampong Cham from Siem Reap daily. An estimated 3,750 live dogs are being exported out of Siem Reap province every month for slaughter, driving the dog meat trade in the capital city of Phnom Penh. While not detailed in this report, FOUR PAWS investigative team has visited 110 restaurants in Phnom Penh alone specializing in dog meat. If each of these restaurants kills between 4-6 dogs per day, this represents the consumption of over 200,000 dogs per year in the capital city. Much of the dog meat sold at these restaurants originated from dogs in Siem Reap province. An estimated 2-3 million dogs are slaughtered for the trade in Cambodia annually.

Final Destination

Dogs that are transported out of Siem Reap meet a cruel fate at slaughterhouses in Kandal Province, Skun, Kampong Thom, and Kampong Cham. Dogs are drowned at high-volume slaughterhouses, stripped of their fur, and sold to restaurants in Phnom Penh. In Kandal province, there are three high-volume slaughterhouses for dogs all within a 15 minute drive of each other. These slaughterhouses use drowning pits to kill 60-100 dogs per day.



1.4 Profitability

Pricing of live dogs and meat are as follows:

- Live dogs: 8,000-12,000 Riels (\$2.00-\$3.00) per kg
- Raw meat: 11,000-17,000 Riels (\$2.75-\$4.25) per kg
- Dog meat dish (soup or curry) at a restaurant: 5,000 Riels (\$1.25)
- Roasted meat: 50,000 Riels (\$12.50) per kg

2. Consumers

Consumers of dog meat in Siem Reap and throughout Cambodia are primarily Khmer and Vietnamese, and to a lesser extent Korean and Chinese tourists. According to market research conducted by FOUR PAWS and ARC, the average dog meat consumer is male, between the ages of 18-29, has a personal income of 200-300USD per month, and is a blue collar worker. Dog meat is a controversial dish among Khmer people, refused by 60% of people.

3. International Reputation and Tourism

The global public and political communities are becoming increasingly intolerant to the dog meat trade, as vocal opposition is common within the region and around the world. Dogs are seen as companions and protectors, not as food. Nowhere in the world is this more evident than in Cambodia, where dogs play a key role in national security, peacekeeping, and mine detection activities. Since the end of 2018, the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority reported that from January 2000 - August 2018, a total of 1,444 people were killed in landmine accidents, while another 6,192 people were injured. The Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) currently has 132 dogs in its care, 70 of which currently help with mine clearance operations. These heroic dogs are being used every day throughout Cambodia, protecting human lives and making a huge contribution to society. CMAC also supports an end to the dog meat trade.

Governments across Southeast Asia are increasingly taking steps to tackle the dog meat trade. In September 2018, the Vice Mayor of Hanoi announced a ban on dog meat in 2021 given the damage to Hanoi's international reputation that the dog meat trade causes. In August 2018, Indonesia's Ministry of Agriculture announced support for a ban on dog and cat meat.

Every year, more than 1 million tourists from around the world visit Angkor Wat to experience the beauty of the Angkor temples. Few people know that only a few kilometers from such spectacular historic sites are places where thousands of dogs are brutally killed each day. In fact, thousands of international tourists unknowingly drive directly past a large dog meat holding area on the way to Banteay Samré temple every week. Given the high visibility of some dog meat restaurants, some tourists have started complaining about the dog meat trade. At one restaurant located very close to Angkor Wat, the owner was keenly aware that Western tourists are upset by dog meat, and as a result was more discreet in his advertising.

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Siem Reap made international headlines recently, announcing a ban on elephant riding. Action against the dog meat trade would be equally celebrated around the world.

4. Rabies and other public health risks

Rabies is an infectious viral disease caused by the viruses from the genus Lyssavirus that affects the central nervous system of warm-blooded animals, including humans. Rabies transmission normally occurs through a bite or scratch (usually through saliva) from an infected animal. In up to 99% of cases, domestic dogs are responsible for rabies virus transmission to humans. Rabies is a 100% fatal but also 100% preventable

disease if treated before the onset of clinical symptoms. In Cambodia, there are approximately 800 recorded human deaths each year, however the actual number of deaths is most likely much higher. Cambodia has one of the highest incidence rates of human rabies in the world.

The dog meat trade is incompatible with rabies elimination, and puts dog catchers, traffickers, butchers, consumers, and the public at risk for infection. The sourcing and transportation of dogs from highly rabies-endemic provinces to restaurants and slaughterhouses nationwide and internationally is in contravention of rabies control and elimination guidelines by key health advisory bodies including the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

Given the increasing recognition and evidence of the rabies risk that the dog meat trade poses, any attempts to eliminate rabies in Cambodia will fail without addressing the trade in dogs for human consumption. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States (CDC) commented:



There are reports that dog meat markets have a higher rate of rabies than the general dog population, as people often sell dogs to the markets when they act sick; some of these sick dogs have rabies. Furthermore, there are at least three published reports of humans acquiring rabies from activities associated with the dog meat market, emphasizing that the risk is very real.

– CDC, February 2018

Since 2000, the Institut Pasteur in Cambodia has tested on average 200 biting dogs each year. Nearly 50% of them were found to be infected with the deadly rabies virus. During our investigation, sick and diseased dogs were routinely slaughtered and sold for meat, as well as those that have been killed in a way that poses a grave, and potentially fatal, risk to both the public and consumers. Existing published research has revealed evidence of rabies infection to humans at the following stages of the dog meat supply chain – dog slaughter, butchering, preparation and consumption of raw meat. Furthermore, dog capturing and handling associated with the trade also increases the risk of dog bites and scratches, given the stressful circumstances surrounding dog capture and that many of the dogs are not used to being handled. Many dog traders reported being bitten in the past.

Our investigation found the following:

- Dogs highly suspicious for rabies (demonstrating neurologic signs) were often sold for the dog meat trade because of their illness or change in behavior.
- At slaughterhouses and restaurants, dogs were routinely bludgeoned on the head, with far-reaching blood splatter, and potential spread of infectious brain matter.
- Dogs exhibiting signs of severe illness including neurologic signs suspicious for rabies infection were slaughtered for meat.
- Traders and butchers failed to wear any type of personal protective equipment to protect themselves from bites or cuts.
- Reports of dogs being poisoned and their carcasses sold for consumption.
- Brains were occasionally consumed by restaurant diners, posing a potential public health risk due to rabies.



There are also media reports demonstrating the link between dog meat consumption and rabies in Cambodia:

- [Cambodia deaths linked to barbequed dog carcasses \(2015\) CBS News](#)
- [Doctors confirm that consuming rabid dog or cat meat is a risk for health \(2019\) Mekong Post News](#)

5. A Proposed Collaborative and Solution-Based Approach

FOUR PAWS and ARC would like to propose a collaborative approach to support Siem Reap authorities to tackle the dog meat trade based on:

- **Concerns for animal welfare:** There is evidence documenting severe animal cruelty during all stages of the dog meat trade in Siem Reap and throughout Cambodia – from capture, transport, sale to slaughter.
- **Concerns for public health:** Sick dogs are routinely entering the food chain and dog meat slaughterhouses are unhygienic, operate illegally, and sell unsafe food products. Also concerning is the potential for rabies-infected dogs sold for meat, jeopardizing the health of butchers, consumers, and traders. There is evidence linking the dog meat trade to increased rabies incidence in many countries. Considering Cambodia and ASEAN’s goal to end rabies, having an uncontrolled trade in unvaccinated dogs, with frequent movements to and from Siem Reap and throughout the country, will not make reaching this goal feasible.
- **Illegality:** Dog slaughterhouses are not licensed, and fail to meet basic hygiene standards. The sub-decree 108 on Control of Slaughterhouse and Slaughtering Business and Primary Animal Product Processing Premises is designed to prevent the widespread of animal diseases, protect animal health, guarantee the product quality and protect public health in the Kingdom of Cambodia. Article 9 states, ‘*Selling meat and animal product which contain the source of contamination or communicable disease to animal or human beings shall be prohibited and punishable in accordance with the applicable law.*’ And because dogs are not included as a species in sub-decree 108, such dog meat slaughterhouses cannot be legally registered.

Furthermore, the dog meat trade is also in violation of Chapters 8 (Slaughterhouse and Sanitation), Chapter 9 (Movement of Animals and Animal Products), Chapter 11 (Animal Welfare), and Chapter 19 (Inspection) of the Cambodian Law on Animal Health and Production which was enacted by the National Assembly on December 16, 2015.

- **Potential damage to international tourism and reputation:** As an ever-growing number of countries around the world are taking actions to tackle the dog meat trade, the global public and political communities are becoming increasingly intolerant to the dog meat trade, as vocal opposition is increasingly common within the region, in Cambodia, and around the world.
- **Existing local commitment to tackle the dog meat trade:** As pet ownership becomes more popular, Khmer people are standing up against the dog meat trade. Select Cambodian government agencies are also in support of ending the trade. In July 2019, CMAC, FOUR PAWS, and ARC hosted a workshop in Phnom Penh to celebrate the important role dogs play in Khmer society, and discuss the threat to animal welfare that the dog meat trade poses. The workshop was attended by over 70 government stakeholders including the General Directorate of Animal Health and Production, National Centre for Peacekeeping Forces, Mines, and ERW Clearance, the Cambodian Mine Action Centre, and Department of Counter Terrorism and Anti-Narcotics.



- **Culture and religion:** Dog meat is not reported to be a traditional food and is in fact strongly viewed among those that eat it as not being a part of Cambodian culture. Furthermore, dog meat is cited as one of the ten forbidden meats in Buddhist scriptures.

6. Recommendations

FOUR PAWS and ARC wish to support the government of Siem Reap to combat the dog meat trade on the basis of public health, animal welfare, and tourism. Based on the investigation and market research study, we recommend the following collaborative actions:

1. Create a community plan for closing establishments involved in DMT.
2. Engage with local and national media to declare that dog meat will not be tolerated on the basis that it is a detriment to tourism, public health, and animal welfare. Enforcement and rescue of dogs coupled with effective press coverage will send a strong message to the industry that the production and sale of dog meat will no longer be tolerated.
3. Develop and implement a citywide awareness and educational program with the help of national and international media to raise awareness of the risk of the dog meat trade, particularly in regards to rabies.
4. Issue an international press release celebrating action taken by the Siem Reap government to combat the dog meat trade, promoting its image as a world-class tourist destination.
5. Consider targeted sterilization and rabies vaccination for roaming and owned dogs, to reduce the numbers of unwanted puppies born each year and eliminate rabies.

FOUR PAWS and ARC are well positioned to assist the government with an effective and positive city-wide campaign to tackle the activities associated with the dog meat trade based on many years' experience of working both within Cambodia and globally on animal welfare issues - including the dog meat trade, live animal confiscation, rescue, and rehabilitation. Both organizations can provide authorities with the expertise, support, and resources needed to ensure a holistic approach, based on targeting illegal activities and providing public education on the dangers of the dog meat trade.





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