

Animal Welfare.
Worldwide.



Phnom Penh, Cambodia – Driving a dangerous trade in dogs for meat

A serious risk to public health and animal welfare

January 2021

1.0 Introduction

For decades, dogs in Cambodia have played an important role in mine detection, national security, and as loyal companions. Despite the special relationship between man and dog, millions of dogs are stolen, traded, transported, and slaughtered for their meat every year in the country.

Driving this unregulated trade is the growing number of restaurants serving dog meat in the country's capital city of Phnom Penh. Every year, the city's more than 100 restaurants specializing in dog meat drives the large-scale importation of at least 125,000 dogs of unknown disease and vaccination status into Phnom Penh. The trade, which appears to be growing in recent years, causes incredible animal suffering, and devastates pet owners who have had their dogs stolen and poses a significant risk to public health.

This large-scale movement of dogs is of grave concern given that rabies is endemic throughout Cambodia, and rabies-infected dogs routinely enter

the trade for human consumption. The import, butchery and consumption of dog meat jeopardizes the health and safety of the city's 1.5 million people, with significant societal, economic and animal welfare impacts. The trade also has the potential to negatively impact Phnom Penh's international reputation as a sought-after tourist destination.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, governments across Asia, including China are acting to ban this trade on the basis of public health risk and growing sentiment that dogs are companions, not food. In July 2020, the Siem Reap Provincial Government declared the first ever ban on the dog meat trade in the Kingdom, a decision which was celebrated around the world. As the nation's capital, the Phnom Penh government has a real opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the health of its citizens and to animal welfare.



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2.0 About FOUR PAWS



FOUR PAWS is the global animal welfare organisation for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them. Founded in 1988 in Vienna by Heli Dugler, the organisation advocates for a world where humans treat animals with respect, empathy and understanding. FOUR PAWS' sustainable campaigns and projects focus on companion animals including stray dogs and cats, farm animals and wild animals – such as bears, big cats, orangutans and elephants – kept in inappropriate conditions as well as in disaster and conflict zones. With offices in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Kosovo, the Netherlands, Switzerland, South Africa, Thailand,

Ukraine, Hungary, the UK, the USA and Vietnam as well as sanctuaries for rescued animals in twelve countries, FOUR PAWS provides rapid help and long-term solutions.

In Cambodia, FOUR PAWS has an MOU with the Cambodian Mine Action Center (CMAC) to end the dog meat trade and supports companion animal projects in Phnom Penh and Koh Dach with local charity Animal Rescue Cambodia. FOUR PAWS also believes in supporting local communities, and has supported the transition of two dog slaughterhouse owners in Takeo Province and Kampong Thom to alternative businesses.

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



3.0 Operations of the trade



Traders collect dogs on the back of motorbikes and deliver them to holding areas, some of which can hold hundreds of dogs at a time.



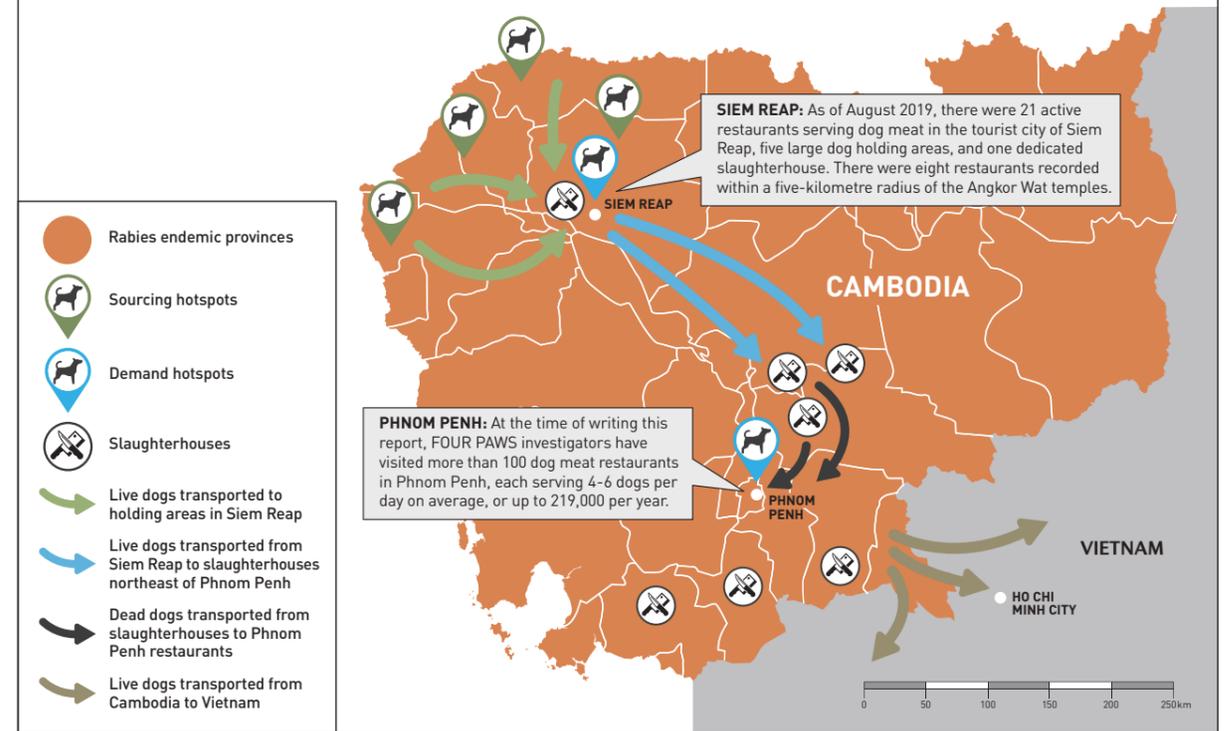
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FOUR PAWS and Animal Rescue Cambodia conducted in-depth investigations into the dog meat trade in Cambodia, focusing on areas where dogs are sourced, slaughtered, and sold. Phnom Penh was identified as a key 'hot spot', driving the trafficking of dogs from as far away as Poi Pet. At the time of the investigation, there were more than 100 restaurants specializing in dog meat in Phnom Penh, responsible for the slaughter and sale of more than 8,500 dogs per month.

The dogs supplying restaurants in Phnom Penh come from throughout Cambodia, their journeys

often lasting days. Most are traded for pots and pans, or are stolen from the streets or homes. Traders collect dogs on the back of motorbikes and deliver them to holding areas, some of which can hold hundreds of dogs at a time. From the holding areas, traffickers use minivans retrofitted with cages inside to regularly transport hundreds of live dogs daily from the Eastern half of the country to slaughterhouses in Kampong Cham (Cheung Prey and Batheay district) and Kandal Province. These high-volume dog slaughterhouses brutally kill upwards of 120 dogs per day, and supply carcasses to restaurants in Phnom Penh.

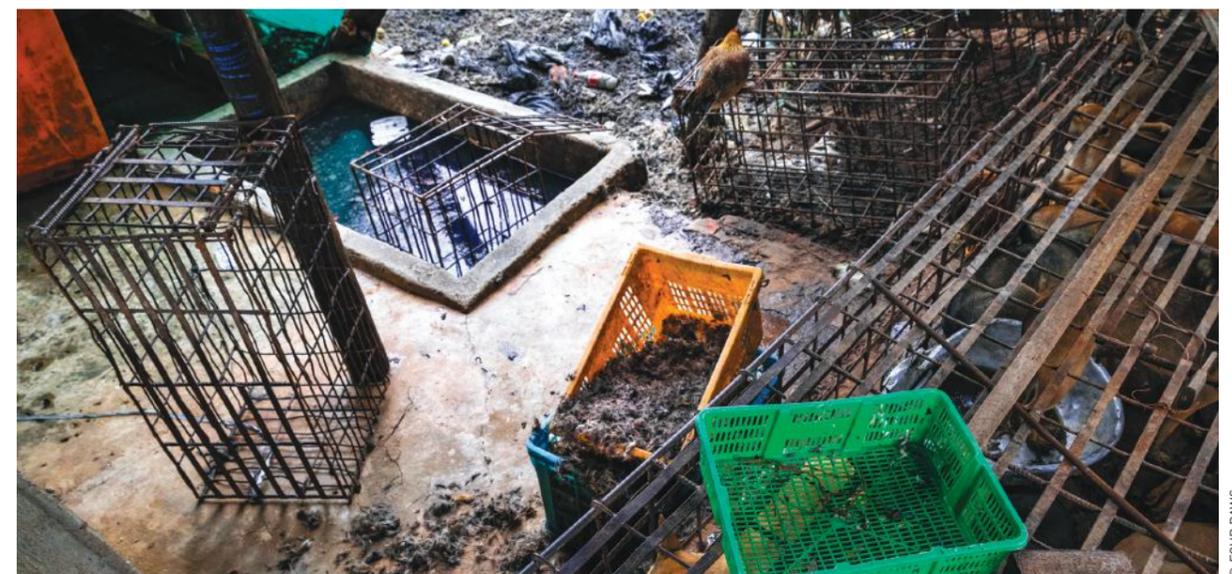
SIEM REAP AND PHNOM PENH DISTRIBUTION AND DEMAND HOTSPOTS



Historically, Siem Reap served as a distribution hub, supplying dogs for consumption in Phnom Penh. In July 2020, The Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, passed a ban on the dog meat trade. However, dogs continue to travel from the Eastern half of the country to supply slaughterhouses in Kampong Cham and Kandal.

During the investigation, a variety of slaughter methods were observed. All were crude, inhumane, and caused prolonged suffering. Drowning is a popular method of killing several dogs at once, using nearby rivers or cement drowning tanks. Dogs are packed tightly in small metal cages which are lowered into a pit of filthy, black stagnant water to drown. This causes a slow, painful death.

Slaughterhouse with drowning pit in Kandal province



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Dog meat wholesalers in Boeng Keng Kang district in Phnom Penh process up to 110 dog carcasses a day. Workers blow torch dog carcasses to remove the fur. Suppliers then distribute them to

restaurants throughout Phnom Penh every morning. At some restaurants, live dogs are housed and killed on-site. Restaurants are unhygienic and lack basic sanitation practices.

Fur removal in Boeng Keng Hang district



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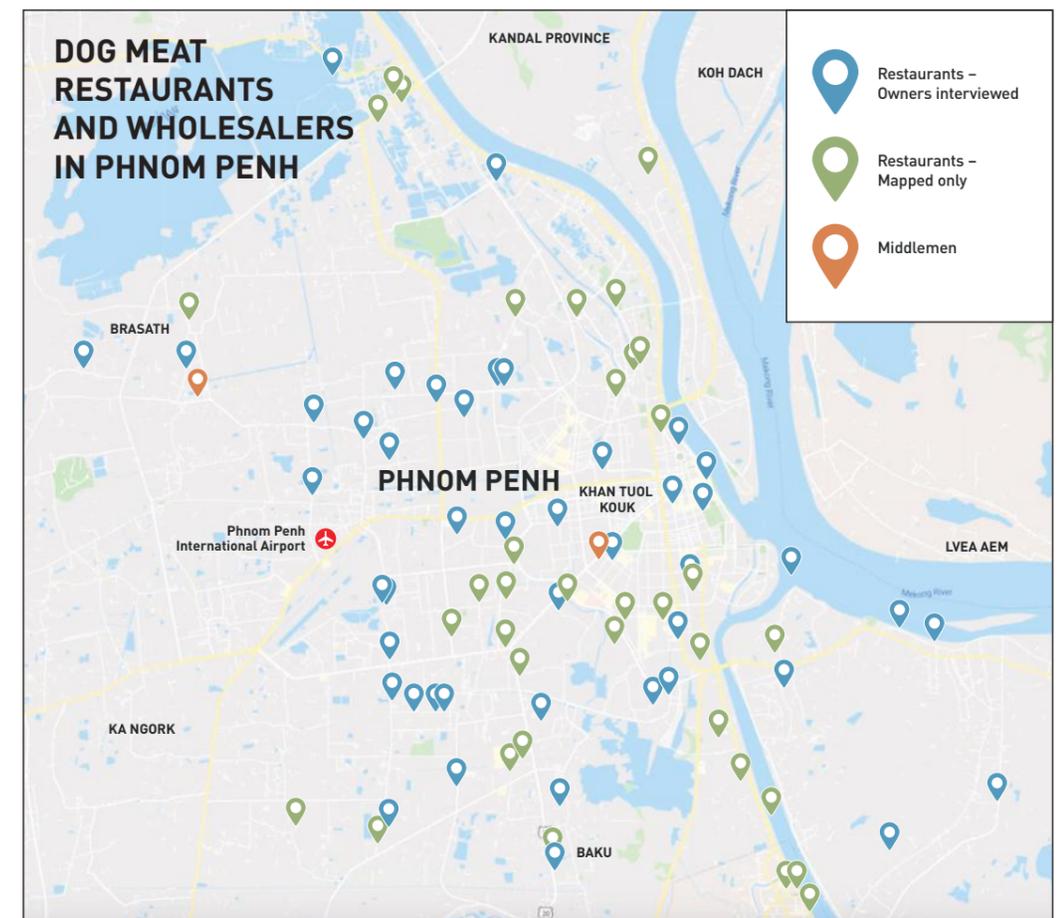
During the investigation, FOUR PAWS interviewed dozens of dog meat restaurant owners, the majority of which reported opening their businesses only within the last 2-3 years. Despite the fact that many reported that demand for dog meat in Phnom Penh was growing, the majority of business owners wanted to get out of the trade. FOUR PAWS also interviewed pet owners throughout Phnom Penh who reported that theft of dogs for sale to slaughterhouses was a common occurrence, and many expressed grief and sadness from having their own animals stolen in the past.

Dog awaiting slaughter at a restaurant in Sen Sok district



© FOUR PAWS

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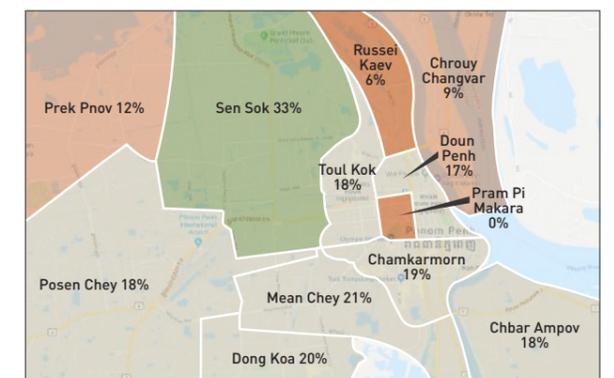
4.0 Dog meat consumption

In addition to the investigation, a market research study was performed to assess the prevalence of dog meat consumption and attitudes in Phnom Penh. The study was conducted by Market Strategy & Development Co., Ltd, (MSD) a marketing and social research consulting firm with its head office in Phnom Penh.

The study revealed that most Cambodians consider dog meat consumption as sinful and goes against Khmer culture and tradition. Consumption is an activity of the minority of people, with only 12.2% of those interviewed consuming dog meat regularly (having consumed within the past one month and more than 10 times previously).

Geographically, in Phnom Penh, consumption of dog meat peaks in the outer urban area of Sen Sok, whereas households closer to the central business district (CBD) in Doun Penh and further to the north tend to consume less often.

Heat map of dog meat consumers



5.0 Legislation

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 spread 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.' As dogs are not included as a species in sub-decree 108, dog meat slaughterhouses cannot be legally registered, instead, they operate as unregulated entities.

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. Dog meat restaurants and slaughtering facilities in Phnom Penh fail to meet any of the above chapters pertaining to animal health and sale.

In July 2020, Siem Reap became the first province in Cambodia to officially ban the dog meat trade in recognition of the animal welfare and public health issues, and potential damage to international reputation.



6.0 Threat to public health

The World Health Organization (WHO) has already explicitly highlighted the trade in dogs for human consumption as a contributing factor to the spread of rabies and the Institute Pasteur recognizes the need for a comprehensive rabies plan that involves large-scale dog vaccination. Vaccination programs will not succeed, however if millions of vaccinated dogs are killed for their meat in Cambodia each year, as such action undermines the ability to achieve herd immunity in dogs.

In Cambodia, there are approximately 800 recorded human deaths from rabies 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 areas to restaurants and slaughterhouses

nationwide is in contravention of rabies control and elimination guidelines by key health advisory bodies including the World Health Organization (WHO), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In February 2018, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States (US 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."

Since 2000, the Institute 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 the investigation, sick and diseased dogs were routinely slaughtered and sold for their 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 transmission to humans at the following stages of the dog meat supply chain – slaughter, butchering, preparation and consumption of raw meat.

Furthermore, dog capture 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.

Our investigation found the following:

- Dogs suspected of having rabies (exhibiting neurological signs, biting) 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, as well as a potential spread of brain matter.
- Dogs exhibiting signs of severe illness including neurologic signs suspicious for rabies infection were slaughtered for their 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, which could pose a risk to anyone consuming their meat.



During the investigation, a variety of slaughter methods were observed. All were crude, inhumane, and caused prolonged suffering.



7.0 International Reputation and Tourism



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Cambodian beer companies also actively promote dog meat on signs in the cities that tourists visit, as dog meat is frequently consumed with alcohol. Historically, such signs can be seen throughout Phnom Penh. In November 2020 Ganzberg beer an international beer company agreed to remove all signs advertising “special meat” to demonstrate that they do not support the cruel dog meat trade. While this does not guarantee that restaurants will stop selling dog meat, it does demonstrate that international companies do not want to be associated with the dog meat trade.

The economic importance of tourism to local governments cannot be understated. The image of countries and cities portrayed throughout the world is important: governments want to be seen as forward-thinking and positive, not as a society ignoring severe health and animal welfare issues. Phnom Penh is a major tourist destination in Southeast Asia, yet there is potential exposure of tourists to the dog meat trade in many places. Unsuspecting tourists may walk by a dog roasting on a spit, or dog heads in a glass case outside local restaurants. In the province, tourists may encounter motorbikes with cages filled with dogs.

Dog meat in restaurants



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Restaurant advertising dog meat in Phnom Penh



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Ganzberg beer sign being taken down, Phnom Penh



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The global public, tourism bodies and political decision-makers are becoming increasingly intolerant of the dog meat trade, as vocal opposition grows within Southeast Asia and around the world. Dogs are increasingly seen as companions and protectors, not as food. Nowhere in the world is this more evident than in Cambodia, where dogs play such a key role in protecting communities from undetonated mines helping to protect homes across the Kingdom, and continuing to be loyal companions as they have done for thousands of years.

8.0 Regional responses during COVID-19

Since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged from Wuhan, China in late November 2019, governments in the region have acted to ban the dog meat trade. For instance, the Chinese cities of Shenzhen and Zhuhai introduced city-wide bans on dog and cat meat consumption, and the Chinese national government has publicly stated that dogs are considered companion animals and not livestock, and has removed them from the list of animals considered “food”.

In India, the State Government of the Northeast state of Nagaland banned the import, trading, and sale of dog meat. Earlier in the year, the state of Mizoram amended legislation to remove dogs from the list of animals suitable for slaughter.

In July 2020, the Siem Reap Provincial Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries issued a letter outlawing the dog meat trade, reflective of current opinion that dogs are companions, not food.

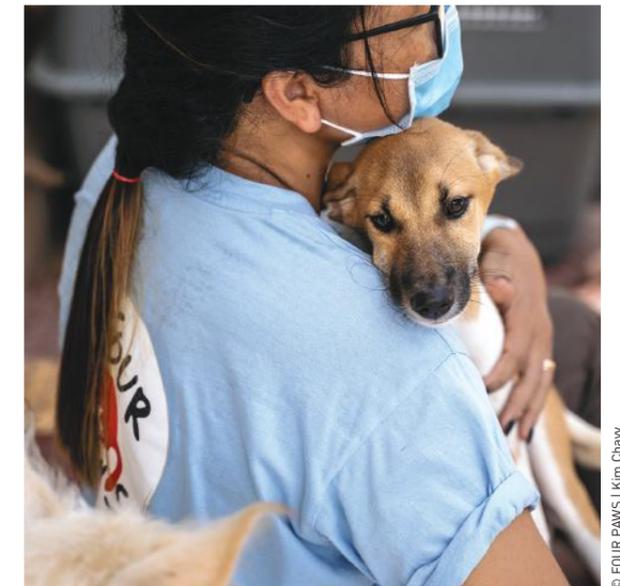
9.0 A Proposed Collaborative and Solution-Based Approach

FOUR PAWS and Animal Rescue Cambodia (ARC) would like to propose a collaborative approach to support Phnom Penh authorities to tackle the dog meat trade. Based on the investigation and market research study that we have conducted, we recommend the following collaborative actions:

1. Create a community plan for closing establishments in Phnom Penh involved in the dog meat trade.
2. Engage with local and national media to announce that dog meat will not be tolerated in Phnom Penh on the basis that it is a detriment to tourism, public health, and animal welfare.
3. Develop and implement a city-wide 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 Phnom Penh 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. Support can be provided for live animal confiscations, rescues, rabies control activities, and livelihood conversions. We are happy to provide authorities with the expertise, support, and resources needed to ensure a holistic approach, based on targeting illegal activities which pose a risk to public health and raising public awareness on the dangers of the dog meat trade.

Comforting a puppy rescued from the dog meat trade



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