



Meet a Nonprofit Working to End the Dog Meat Trade in Asia and Africa

"Dogs and cats were bred thousands of years ago to be our friends and companions, not our food," says the co-founder of [SayNoToDogMeat.Net](#).

Lisa Plummer Savas | Jul 25th 2014 |  1 Contribution

Editor's note: This post contains some startling facts and images. Some readers might find the images below quite disturbing. Just the same, we believe it's important for our readers to know about such things.



For most animal lovers, the thought of eating a dog or cat would be disgusting and disturbing. But in some cultures, consuming a companion animal is viewed no differently than eating a chicken, cow, or pig. As a result, a thriving dog and cat meat trade exists in many parts of the world, most notably in Asian countries, including China, Vietnam, South Korea, and Indonesia. Fueled in part by long-standing culinary tradition and medicinal superstition, this cruel meat industry claims the lives of millions of dogs and cats each year.

But while the dog and cat meat trade in Asia has been widely publicized in recent years, little is known about the growing trade that exists in Africa, which is especially common in countries plagued by extreme drought and famine.



“I think few people know about Africa’s dog and cat meat trade or the depth of its cruelty,” says Michele Brown, veteran animal rescuer and co-founder of [SayNoToDogMeat.Net](https://www.saynotodogmeat.net), a registered nonprofit animal welfare organization dedicated to ending the dog and cat meat trade in Asia and Africa. “Dogs and cats are eaten in Asia less out of need and more out of choice, while in Africa they are eaten for different reasons. In Nigeria and Ghana, for example, dog meat has become part of the traditional diet because people like the taste, while in other countries including Uganda, Sudan, and Rwanda, pets have made it to the menu so people can simply survive.”



But there is hope on the horizon. Founded in 2013 by Brown and Dr. Jose Depra, wildlife veterinarian and chief environmental officer of the International Animal Rescue Foundation, SayNoToDogMeat.Net is a global organization comprising animal lovers and experienced animal professionals throughout the world. Its mission includes spreading global awareness about the dog and cat meat trade, promoting humane education, rescuing at-risk dogs and cats from the hands of meat traffickers and butchers and pressuring governments to end the trade.

But in Africa, [SayNoToDogMeat](http://SayNoToDogMeat.Net)'s efforts will especially focus on food aid initiatives to help remove dogs and cats -- classified in Africa as "bush meat" along with primates and other wildlife -- as a necessary food source.



According to Depre, stopping the dog and cat meat trade in Africa is not only crucial for saving companion animals from cruelty and death but also for protecting human health across the continent and globally.

“The African dog meat trade poses a serious health risk both to African natives and overseas citizens,” says Depre. “While the trade is not as large in Africa as it is in Asia, concerns are increasing about viruses such as Ebola hemorrhagic fever, rabies, SARS, and the potential for new strains of the H1N1 virus to emerge. Dogs and cats within Western Africa are mostly strays who forage for food on forest floors, so when they return to their local communities they can pass on the deadly Ebola virus. It takes just one or more people from an infected

zone to travel overseas and start a major outbreak that could prove to be terribly fatal in highly populated areas.”

According to Brown, rabies is a virus that runs rampant in dog-eating countries. This poses an extreme health risk not only to those who work in the trade but also to those who eat the meat -- including tourists.



“Because the trade is unregulated, eating dog meat in Asia and Africa presents many serious health issues,” says Brown. “Rabies can be transmitted from dogs to humans and can be shed in a dog’s saliva. In fact, the virus can be transmitted from a dog to a human even after the animal is dead, and can lay dormant in a person for up to seven years before symptoms even appear. Oftentimes dog meat is cooked with the dog’s blood, which could be infected. Once rabies symptoms are diagnosed, the virus is almost always fatal.”

While SayNoToDogMeat.Net is not accepting donations until its nonprofit status is finalized, the organization has been busy running aggressive petition and public awareness campaigns via its website and social media pages, as well as preparing to initiate rescue efforts throughout Asia. The organization is also discussing plans to open a small rescue facility in Vietnam -- a hotbed for the

trade -- where dogs and cats will be housed, rehabilitated, and then placed in safe, loving homes.



Dogs are sold at a market in Africa.

With their extensive backgrounds in animal rescue, their combined knowledge and experience with the dog and cat meat trade, along with a shared passion for ending animal cruelty, Brown and Depre are ready and determined not only to bring this barbaric industry to the world's attention but also to bring it to a swift end.



“This cruelty must stop,” says Brown. “Being an unregulated industry means that dogs and cats are being handled, transported, and slaughtered with no regard for their well-being. With no one looking over their shoulders, butchers can be as cruel as they like, with no repercussions. We believe that dogs and cats were bred thousands of years ago to be our friends and companions, not our food, and we are determined to spread awareness about the ongoing suffering that they face at the hands of this cruel industry. Our hope is that by doing so we will help create meaningful social change, resulting in a more humane world for dogs and cats.”

To learn more about SayNoToDogMeat.Net and the dog and cat meat trade, please SayNoToDogMeat.Net, its [Facebook page](#), and its [Twitter page](#).

Read more about the dog meat trade on Dogster:

- [Reality Check: Demand for Dog Meat Increases in Vietnam](#)
- [It's About Time: Activists in China Protest a Dog-Meat Festival](#)
- [1,200 Dogs Rescued from Thailand's Dog-Meat Smugglers](#)

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