Humane World for Animals™

Formerly called
Humane Society International

Ending the Dog Meat Industry in South Korea

Building a more compassionate society toward dogs

October 2025

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개식용 없는
대한민국!
구분이 웬말인가!
기르는 개
먹는 개?
DON'T EAT
MY FRIEND
#SAYNOTODOGMEAT
대한민국의 부끄러운
개식용을
종식하라
#ACTNOWKOREA END
DOG MEAT
TRADE
이제는 때가 됐다!
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Foreword

South Korea has demonstrated to the world that it is possible to ban the dog meat trade while helping those involved in the industry transition to new livelihoods. This milestone has been achieved during a time of shifting societal views, as the consumption of dogs is increasingly seen as an unacceptable practice in modern South Korean society. This change is part of a broader global trend, with the rise in pet ownership, the influence of social media and the increasing recognition of animal sentience prompting more compassionate attitudes toward animals. The younger generation has been at the forefront of this movement, demanding government action to end the dog meat industry.

Although challenges remain in other countries across Asia where the dog meat trade persists, including cultural practices in some local communities and the economic interests tied to the dog meat trade, these challenges can be addressed. For instance, culture is not static; it evolves over time and can be encouraged to do so in ways that exclude both animal and human suffering.

For example, in Mexico the cruelty-free Fiesta de San Bartolo has replaced the Kots Kaal Pato, a brutal Yucatan ritual of stringing up animals inside piñatas and beating them to death or cutting off their heads. To achieve this shift, Humane World for Animals Mexico worked on the ground with local partners to offer humane education and alternative activities to help the community embrace a cruelty-free cultural change. The new festival upheld the fiesta, but in a way where animals are no longer victims of cruelty in the name of "entertainment."

Economic concerns can also be addressed, as South Korea's efforts to transition workers away from the industry to new livelihoods have demonstrated. The rise of animal protection movements across Asia provides further hope, as does the growing momentum advocating for the protection of animals worldwide.

There are substantial opportunities to build on this progress, including raising greater awareness of the risks of the trade, strengthening legal frameworks to eliminate the dog meat trade and ensuring effective enforcement. Collaboration between local animal protection organizations, governments and communities is key to achieving these goals. By continuing to push for compassionate policies and societal change, we can look forward to a future in which the dog meat (and cat meat) trade is no longer tolerated and where society increasingly embraces compassion and respect for all animals. Ultimately, South Korea's example offers a beacon of hope for other nations to follow, demonstrating that it is possible to create the positive change for animals that most people across Asia want to see, while respecting localized culture and building economic stability.

We thank the Korean public, policymakers, celebrities, animal welfare organizations and our faithful supporters in the great progress to end South Korea's cruel dog meat industry, and look forward to the day when there are no dogs consumed for their meat in South Korea, and eventually, the world.

Kitty Block
President and Chief Executive Officer
Humane World for Animals

NATIONAL RALLY CALLING FOR THE ENACTMENT OF THE DOG MEAT BAN ACT IN FRONT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEOUL, 29TH OCTOBER 2023 © YONHAP NEWS

SOUTH KOREA DOG MEAT FARM RESCUE (FARM 5) 2016. MEREDITH LEE/HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

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1. Introduction

Each year, millions of dogs and cats are subjected to extreme suffering and cruelty as they are trafficked, traded and killed for human consumption across Asia. Humane World for Animals (formerly called Humane Society International) stands at the forefront of the global campaign to end this horrific practice. Over the past decade, we have focused our efforts on South Korea, China, Indonesia, India and more recently Viet Nam. While extreme animal suffering is a common theme throughout the dog and cat meat trade in all these countries, the trade also poses significant public health risks, including facilitating the spread of fatal diseases such as rabies. Additionally, it often violates local, national and international laws and regulations related to public health, food safety, slaughter, environmental waste management, cross-border movement of animals and pet theft. This trade has also been shown to negatively impact tourism in those countries where it exists. Together, these urgent concerns provide powerful reasons for governments to take decisive action to end the trade.

Closure of the dog meat farm at Gupo Market in Busan in 2019. Jean Chung/For Humane World for Animals

South Korea is the latest country in Asia to successfully ban the dog meat industry, driven by growing local concerns about animal cruelty and public health, the rise of animal welfare advocacy and extensive public awareness campaigns. As public interest and awareness intensified, so too did governmental actions and political will, ultimately paving the way for the ban.

While the dog meat trade in South Korea differs from other countries, where most dogs are snatched from the streets, stolen from homes or sold by their owners, there is much to learn from South Korea's approach. Unlike other countries in Asia, where dog meat primarily comes from informal and

South Korea Dog Meat Farm Rescue (Farm 6) 2017. Jean Chung/For Humane World for Animals

often illegal supply chains, South Korea's industry is based on intensive farming. Despite this structural difference, the country's success in mobilizing political and social momentum to outlaw the industry serves as a valuable model for change, challenging the belief that such a ban was impossible.

South Korea is the latest country in Asia to successfully ban the dog meat industry, driven by growing local concerns about animal cruelty and public health, the rise of animal welfare advocacy and extensive public awareness campaigns.

This report details the journey leading to South Korea's historic ban on the dog meat industry, offering valuable insights for policymakers and animal advocates worldwide in addressing the dog meat (and cat meat) trade. It makes a compelling case for ending the trade in other nations, drawing on similar urgent concerns. The report highlights the crucial role that local animal welfare groups, the public and governments can play in ending the trade, while providing actionable recommendations for countries where the dog meat (and cat meat) trade still exists.

SOUTH KOREA DOG MEAT FARM RESCUE (FARM 10) 2017. JEAN CHUNG/FOR HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

2. Background of the dog meat industry in South Korea

The consumption of dog meat in South Korea has a varied history. It was viewed as a delicacy during some dynasties while being frowned upon during others. Indeed, during several key dynasties, dog meat, along with all meat consumption, was discouraged due to the dominance of Buddhism. In more modern history, following the Korean war, when all food was scarce, dog meat experienced a resurgence as a protein source. Although dog meat eating is often mischaracterized as a "centuries-old custom," implying cultural permanence, it is more accurate to say that while dog meat has existed in South Korea to a lesser or greater extent across history, it has never been a major part of the everyday Korean diet for the vast majority of the population. It is primarily consumed by older men of 50 years-plus, who hold the mistaken belief that dishes such as dog meat soup (*boshintang* in Korea) offer health benefits such as invigorating the blood and combating lethargy. This older, male demographic is also the primary consumer of *gaesoju*, a dog meat tonic sold in traditional medicine shops.

Dog meat is mostly consumed during the summer months in South Korea, especially during Bok Nal, the three hottest days of summer between July and August, when a range of foods are consumed, in the belief that they will combat the oppressive heat. Outside of this demographic, consumer surveys over the past decade show that most South Koreans do not regularly consume dog meat, if at all, and this is particularly the case among younger Koreans, who are increasingly against this practice.

The notion that dog meat is an integral part of South Korean culture has been increasingly challenged by younger generations, the majority of whom, advocate for a culture of compassion and view dogs as companions rather than as food. In addition, over the past decade, the number of households sharing their home with a dog or cat as pets has significantly increased in South Korea, with families now viewing dogs as companions, not food.

A 2022 Nielsen survey commissioned by Humane World for Animals Korea suggests that more than half of South Koreans in their 20s who had consumed dog meat in the previous year felt

SOUTH KOREA DOG MEAT FARM RESCUE (FARM 18) 2023. JEAN CHUNG/FOR HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

social pressure, particularly in business meal settings, family special occasions or social gatherings, to do so from influential seniors such as their father or senior work colleagues.

Although certain groups with vested interests, such as dog meat farmer associations and restaurant owners, have at times invoked cultural arguments to defend the practice, there is little evidence that dog meat is closely tied to South Korea's national identity. During major international sporting events, including the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympic Games, the 2002 FIFA World Cup and the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics, global scrutiny of South Korea's dog meat consumption sparked what was often described in Western media as cultural backlash. However, rather than a defense of dog meat itself, this reaction is better understood as an assertion of national pride, driven by frustration over the country being singled out for criticism. In these instances, dog meat became a convenient symbol through which South Korea's reputation was challenged, prompting a response that was more about defense of the country rather than the practice of eating dog meat. A 2023 Nielsen survey commissioned by Humane World for Animals Korea found that over half of respondents believed eating dog meat harmed South Korea's global reputation, while only 20% considered it important to South Korean culture.

The dog meat industry in Korea, once much larger, has seen a significant decline, driven by animal advocacy efforts and shifting public attitudes. A decade ago, according to research conducted by the Korea Associates Business Consultancy in 2015, South Korea's dog meat industry was valued at approximately KRW 1,753 billion (USD 1.5 billion), with an estimated 2.5 million dogs killed and consumed annually. By 2024, the industry had undergone a dramatic decline, with government statistics confirming that around 460,000 dogs are now bred annually on approximately 1,500 farms nationwide.

The sharp reduction in a relatively short period was driven by a powerful demand for change from within South Korea itself. While supported by global campaigners, the movement was led by national and local South Korean animal welfare groups and politicians who successfully mobilized public sentiment. By 2023, a survey commissioned by Humane World for Animals Korea revealed that 86% of South Koreans said they would not consume dog meat in the future, and over 57% supported an outright ban.

Humane World for Animals Korea and KARA visited Seoul City Plaza in 2018 to protest the industry's cruelty. Borami Seo/Humane World for Animals

South Korea Dog Meat Farm Rescue (Farm 5) 2016. Frank Loftus/For Humane World for Animals

The dogs were unable to move naturally, forced to lie down in their own feces, and suffering from untreated skin and eye infections, as well as painful wounds caused by the unsanitary and harsh conditions.

A key factor in shifting attitudes was the exposure of cruelty within the industry, scenes that many South Koreans had never witnessed before. Undercover investigations revealed thousands of dogs confined to cramped, barren wire cages, exposed to freezing winters and scorching summers. The dogs were unable to move naturally, forced to lie down in their own feces, and suffering from untreated skin and eye infections, as well as painful wounds caused by the unsanitary and harsh conditions. These exposés laid bare the grim reality of life on dog meat farms, where animals endured immense physical and psychological suffering before meeting a brutal end by electrocution.

On Jan. 9, 2024, the South Korean National Assembly passed a landmark law banning the farming, slaughter, trade and sale of dogs for human consumption, starting in February 2027. This historic victory was celebrated by hundreds of animal advocates gathered outside the National Assembly, while both local and international media recognized it as a significant milestone for animal welfare. The ban was the culmination of a decade of advocacy by animal protection groups, a shift in public attitudes and growing political will to end dog meat farming.

SOUTH KOREA DOG MEAT FARM RESCUE, JINDO ISLAND, 2021. JEAN CHUNG/FOR HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

3. Actions taken by Humane World for Animals Korea and other local groups

3.1 Strategic local partnerships

Although the campaign to end the dog meat industry in South Korea has often been viewed through a Western lens, its success was largely driven by the unprecedented organization and coordination of local animal protection groups. Organizations such as Korea Animal Welfare Association (KAWA), Korean Animal Rights Advocates (KARA), Humane World for Animals Korea and more recently LIFE, Animal Liberation Wave and others joined forces to form strategic partnerships and coordinated actions. Their unified efforts sent a powerful message that South Korea's animal protection movement was unified in its determination to end the dog meat industry.

In August 2016, the animal welfare group KARA hosted South Korea's first-ever global anti-dog meat conference in Seoul, bringing together delegates from the National Assembly, ecologists, legal experts, veterinarians and international animal protection groups, including China's Dalian Vshine Animal Protection and Taiwan's Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). The conference marked a pivotal moment in the movement to ban dog meat in South Korea, sparking serious discussions on legislative change and challenging the perception that dog meat consumption was solely a Korean issue. Perspectives and insights from across Asia underscored the broader regional implications of the trade.

The event garnered significant attention within South Korea, with notable participants including then-mayor of Seoul, Park Won-soon, who delivered a keynote speech expressing his hope for an end to the country's dog meat industry. Other key attendees included Lee Jeong-mi and Bak Hong-geun, co-representatives of the National Assembly's Forum for Animal Welfare and members of the Justice Party and Minjoo Party,

respectively, as well as Professor Woo Hee-jong of Seoul National University's College of Veterinary Medicine. Further elevating the conference's international profile, world-renowned primatologist and UN Ambassador of Peace Dr. Jane Goodall sent a video message of support, reinforcing the global significance of the movement.

At this conference, KARA also announced its new partnership with Humane World for Animals Korea, the first of many strategic partnerships that signaled a new era of cooperation within South Korea's animal movement. This marked a shift from previous norms, where organizations typically operated independently rather than pooling resources, expertise and efforts.

Local animal groups play a crucial role in ending animal cruelty in any country. Recognizing this, Humane World for Animals applied its global partnership approach to South Korea, working with local campaigners alongside its own Korean staff based in Seoul. This collaborative strategy proved to be a key element in the effort to end the dog meat trade.

Over nearly a decade, from the start of Humane World for Animals Korea's work in South Korea to the announcement of the dog meat industry ban, the organization partnered with numerous groups, including KARA, KAWA, Free Korean Dogs, LIFE, Busan Korean Alliance for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, KoreanK9Rescue, Yongin Animal Care Association and Animal Liberation Wave, and animal shelters in Ilsan. Together, these alliances played a vital role in achieving what was once thought impossible, a nationwide ban on the dog meat industry.

Among Humane World for Animals Korea's many partnerships, several stand out as particularly impactful:

- **July 2019:** We joined forces with Korean animal groups to assist Busan authorities in shutting down the Gupo dog meat market, rescuing more than 80 dogs. Gupo Market was once one of the largest and most prominent hubs for the dog meat trade in South Korea.
- **December 2020:** In collaboration with the Korean animal group LIFE and regional officials, we rescued approximately 100 dogs from an illegal dog farm in Gimpo.
- **April 2021:** We partnered with LIFE, Korean K9 Rescue, Yongin Animal Care Association and local authorities to rescue dogs from an illegal farm in Yongin.
- **August 2021:** We conducted a joint rescue operation with LIFE on Jindo Island, where an illegal farm had been breeding and slaughtering Jindo dogs for human consumption for over 20 years.
- **July 2022:** After intervention by Korean K9 Rescue, authorities shut down an illegal dog meat farm in Ansan City, leaving behind 21 abandoned dogs who we stepped in to rescue.

These joint efforts underscored the power of collaboration in dismantling South Korea's dog meat industry, proving that strategic partnerships between animal protection groups and authorities can drive meaningful change.

3.2 Public protest and street demonstrations

Korean lawmakers joined us at a National Assembly event in 2023 to advance a ban on the dog meat industry. Borami Seo/Humane World for Animals

Korean animal protection organizations have also increasingly mobilized the public with highly visual demonstrations on the streets of Seoul. In July 2017, over 100 protesters from more than 30 Korean animal welfare groups took part in an anti-dog-meat protest at Seoul Plaza, holding placards condemning dog meat consumption. Several members of the Democratic Party of Korea, as well as members of the Korean Veterinary Medical Association, also took part. In February 2018, Humane World for Animals Korea and KARA created a mobile campaign truck depicting a dog meat farm, which was driven around Seoul to engage members of the public in discussions about the suffering of dogs on the farms. Later that year, Korean group Animal Liberation Wave conducted an eye-catching event in front of the National Assembly featuring activists holding handmade models of emaciated dead dogs from dog meat farms. Additionally in 2022 and 2023, there were street protests involving hundreds of campaigners and members of the public calling on the government to take action.

Humane World for Animals announced the closure of a dog meat market in Gupo Market in Busan in 2019. Jean Chung/For Humane World for Animals

Animal groups including Humane World for Animals Korea rallied in Seoul against dog meat during Bok Nal in 2023. Animal Liberation Wave

3.3 Mobilising petitions for change

These collective actions also extended to large-scale petitions, which Humane World for Animals and our partners employed to raise public awareness, gain media traction and influence policymakers. In August 2018, Humane World for Animals Korea, KARA and petition site Care2 hand-delivered a 1-million-signature petition to then-president Moon Jae-In's Blue House residence. This action led to a pledge from the Blue House to consider removing dogs from the legal definition of livestock, a significant step toward ending the dog meat trade.

In 2023, Humane World for Animals Korea and other local animal protection groups collected thousands of signatures in support of a dog meat ban, demonstrating strong public backing for legislative change. We collectively submitted the petition in November 2023 to five National Assembly members who had already proposed dog meat ban bills earlier. We also sent the petition to representatives of the National Assembly Animal Welfare Forum.

On Nov. 7, 2023, after a ceremony where we submitted the petition, South Korea's Democratic Party voted to support a dog meat ban as part of its official agenda.

3.4 Public awareness campaigns and advocacy

Over the years, Humane World for Animals Korea has implemented a series of strategic public awareness campaigns to shift perceptions about dog meat consumption and promote the idea that dogs are companions, not food.

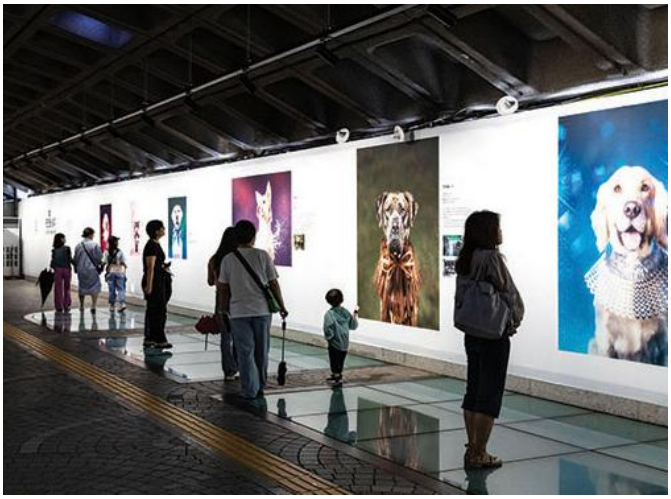
In October 2018, Humane World for Animals Korea held an "I Love Tosas" event at a shopping mall in Seoul to challenge misconceptions about so-called "dog meat" breeds and showcase their more friendly nature to the public.

Harnessing the reach of social media, in 2019 we launched #NameMe, an online public voting campaign in which thousands of Korean citizens voted on the new name of "Nuri," which means "world" or "universe," to replace the derogatory term "meat dogs."

In 2020, we joined forces with creators of popular Korean digital comics (called webtoons) to call for an end to the dog meat industry during Bok Nal, a period where dog meat consumption in South Korea increases. Cartoonists published specially created webtoons telling the heartwarming stories of dogs rescued from dog meat farms in South Korea. In 2021, Humane World for Animals Korea's My Healthy Diet campaign was launched during the Bok Nal season; we partnered with notable Korean vegan chefs such as Ahn Baek-Rin to promote plant-based recipes to replace dog meat soup, which is regularly eaten during Bok Nal.

In May 2023, we capitalized on growing public concern for dog welfare by launching the *Beyond Prejudice* exhibition in Seoul, bringing powerful photographic portraits of rescued dog meat survivors into the public eye. The exhibition featured 30 dogs, each wearing an elaborate, handcrafted collar designed by artist and advocate Sophie Gamand—a symbol of their strength and resilience and the love and care they now receive as cherished family pets.

The portraits directly challenged the unfounded perception of "meat dogs" as soulless commodities and encouraged visitors to see them as sentient beings no different from



An exhibit by renowned photographer Sophie Gamand in 2023 highlighted survivors of the dog meat industry. Jean Chung/For Humane World for Animals

their companion dogs at home. As part of the exhibition, we gathered public messages in support of banning the dog meat industry. These messages were later showcased in a special exhibition at the National Assembly, titled *Beyond Prejudice: For the Passage of a Dog Meat Ban Bill*, attended by bipartisan lawmakers who had introduced legislation to end the trade.

3.5 Celebrity engagement for a dog meat ban

Harnessing the influence of Korean and international celebrities played a crucial role in elevating the campaign to end dog meat. In contrast to previous years, when South Korean celebrities were often reluctant to speak out for fear of backlash, campaigns by Humane World for Animals Korea and other groups provided credible platforms for high-profile celebrities to take a stand.

One of the most influential voices to join the cause was Korean-American actor Daniel Henney, who became a prominent advocate in 2017. Partnering with Humane World for Animals Korea, a campaign on Seoul's subway system and social media featuring Henney was launched, introducing commuters and online audiences to Clint, a rescued Tosa from a dog meat farm. Henney also filmed a heartfelt interview in which he spoke about his beloved 14-year-old golden retriever, Mango, originally from South Korea.

Henney shared, "*In my personal opinion, every dog out there in Korea is my Mango, and they deserve to live a life like she has. They all deserve to be a companion, to be loved, because they all have that potential to be amazing like she is.*"

He also reflected on the profound impact of witnessing the dog meat industry firsthand whilst filming in Korea in 2007, an experience that profoundly affected him. Having such a widely respected Korean star speak so candidly about the issue, while expressing his deep emotional connection to dogs, was a pivotal moment in the campaign. Henney also adopted Juliette, a golden retriever rescued by Humane World for Animals Korea during a dog meat farm closure. He has remained a dedicated supporter of Humane World for Animals, frequently lending his voice in support of the campaign to end the dog meat industry and attending a dog meat farm rescue.

Over the years, numerous other celebrities and public figures have lent their voices to Humane World for Animals

Actor Daniel Henney participated in our dog meat farm rescue in Cheongju city in 2025. Jean Chung/For Humane World for Animals
Following page: South Korea dog meat farm rescue (Farm 9) 2017. Jean Chung/For Humane World for Animals

> *In my personal opinion, every dog out there in Korea is my Mango, and they deserve to live a life like she has. They all deserve to be a companion, to be loved, because they all have that potential to be amazing like she is."*
>
> **Korean-American actor Daniel Henney.**

Our celebrity supporters include Annie Ko, lead singer of the band Love X Stereo, pictured here with her rescue dog DeeJay in 2022. Courtesy of Annie Ko

Korea's campaign, helping to raise awareness and support for ending the dog meat industry. In 2018, South Korean electro band Love X Stereo donated download profits from its haunting song "Slipping Away" to help Humane World for Animals save more dogs from the industry. Band members Annie Ko and Toby Hwang, proud adopters of DeeJay, a Labrador puppy saved from a dog meat farm in Wonju, actively promoted Humane World for Animals Korea's mission.

In 2019, Korean TV dog trainer Hunter Kang (Hyung-wook) joined Humane World for Animals Korea to save more than 90 dogs and puppies on a dog meat farm in Gyeonggi-do province. In 2022, famous animal behavior trainer and veterinarian Chehyun Seol participated in a social media campaign #LeaveitInthePast, showing his support for ending dog meat consumption.

In May 2023, Korean artist Esna made a personal appearance during our *Beyond Prejudice* portrait exhibition at the Seoul Metro Art Centre, where she helped highlight the photographic art of rescued dogs from the meat industry by award-winning photographer Sophie Gamand. Esna went on to accompany our charity at Incheon International Airport in sending our latest rescued dogs to their new homes in the United States.

International celebrities have played a crucial role in amplifying the message that dogs deserve better than the dog meat industry. Their thoughtful and culturally sensitive engagement has helped to elevate the issue on the global stage, garnering widespread attention and support. In 2017, UK TV star Pete Wicks traveled to Namyangju with Humane World for Animals to help the charity rescue 170 dogs from a meat farm. He documented his emotional experience for his captivated social media audience, following the journey of 13 of the dogs who eventually found adoptive homes in the United Kingdom. In 2018, following the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, U.S. freestyle skier Gus Kenworthy joined Humane World for Animals at a dog meat farm in Gyeonggi-do province to rescue more than 80 dogs from slaughter. Later, he was featured in a #EndDogMeat PSA video alongside fellow Olympians Meagan Duhamel and Lindsey Jacobellis. Kenworthy went on to adopt a dog from this farm rescue. That same year, music mogul Simon Cowell made a generous donation to help Humane World for Animals close its 13th dog meat farm and rescue all dogs on-site. Other stars, including Leona Lewis OBE, Ricky Gervais, Kim Basinger and Peter Egan have also spoken out against the industry, lending their voices to the movement and reinforcing global opposition to the dog meat trade.

3.6 Models for Change program: A blueprint for change

Central to Humane World for Animals' strategy for ending the industry in South Korea has been its Models for Change program. Launched in January 2015, Models for Change provided dog meat farmers with a pathway out of the industry, offering a one-time grant to support their transition to humane, alternative livelihoods such as growing chilies, mushrooms or water parsley. In turn, Humane World for Animals Korea was able to expose the harsh realities of dog meat farming and rescue dogs for international adoption.

Launched in January 2015, Models for Change provided dog meat farmers with a pathway out of the industry, offering a one-time grant to support their transition to humane, alternative livelihoods such as growing chilis, mushrooms or water parsley.

These farm closures marked a historic shift—for the first time, dog meat farmers were presented to the public as willing participants in the dismantling of their own industry. Equally significant, it was also the first time Korean politicians were introduced to a tangible, working model for phasing out the dog meat trade, something previously unseen. Before this program, the dog meat industry was rarely discussed in Korean media, and when it was, it was usually framed as intractable conflict between animal rights activists and dog farmers locked in opposition. Models for Change challenged this narrative by demonstrating a solution that worked for both farmers and animals.

Humane World for Animals Korea recognized that dog farming was a commercial enterprise and that many livelihoods depended on it. For change to be sustainable and lasting, it had

to provide farmers with economically viable alternatives, ensuring a humane and practical transition away from the industry.

Each farmer who participated in the Models for Change program signed a legally binding agreement with Humane World for Animals Korea to permanently close their business related to dog meat. As part of this agreement, farmers pledged never to engage in any form of animal-related business in the future. Additionally, ownership of all dogs on-site was legally transferred to Humane World for Animals Korea, ensuring their safety and placement into adoption programs.

The rescue of these dogs provided an opportunity to dispel the myths perpetuated by the dog meat industry. Contrary to industry claims, the conditions on farms were shockingly filthy and horrifically cruel. The rescues also exposed the false notion that there was a difference between "meat dogs" and "pet dogs". The reality was clear: In addition to tosas and jindos, dogs of all breeds and sizes were found languishing on these farms, including Labradors, golden retrievers, spaniels, Saint Bernards, poodles, beagles, huskies, Boston terriers and even an Afghan hound. By granting unrestricted access to both Korean and international media during these farm closures, we ensured that the harrowing suffering of these animals was impossible to ignore, shifting public perception and generating widespread outrage.

As pet ownership surged in South Korea, so too did public concern for animal welfare. With the cruelty of the dog meat industry broadcast into people's homes via TV news and social media channels, public opinion underwent a significant shift. Shocking exposés of dog meat farms, led by KARA and other animal groups, became more frequent and familiar. As Humane World for Animals Korea had long predicted, the dog meat industry depended on public ignorance to survive. But once the Korean public saw the grim reality firsthand and began questioning the health risks posed by the filthy farm conditions, the tide began to turn. With shifting public attitudes and growing demands for a ban, the stage was set for political momentum to follow.

South Korea Dog Meat Farm (Farm 14), 2019. Jean Chung/For Humane World for Animals

Humane World for Animals Models for Change closures and rescues

Year	Location of farm closure	Dogs rescued
2015	Ilsan	23
	Hongseong	60
	Haemi	123
	Hongseong	27
2016	Wonju	267
2017	Jeonju	219
	Goyang	55
	Seongnam	16
	Yesan	149
	Namyangju	170
2018	Siheung	105
	Namyangju	50
	Namyangju	200
2019	Hongseong	200
	Yeoju	90
2020	Hongseong	70
	Hemi	170
2023	Asan	196
Total	18	2190[1]

[1] This figure does not include 600-plus dogs outside of the Models for Change program rescued by Humane World for Animals with local authorities.

4. Shifting public opinions

Over the decades, public perception of dogs and the consumption of dog meat in South Korea has evolved, driven by growing animal advocacy efforts. The percentage of the population in South Korea that consumes dog meat has never been an overwhelming majority. Shifting that balance was crucial—only with clear public backing could politicians feel confident that they had a strong mandate to pursue a ban.

In 2015, when Humane World for Animals Korea began campaigning on the issue in South Korea, some news reports indicated that opinion polls showed just over half the population consumed dog meat, and less than half (48.6%) of those polled said they would not eat it in the future. In a Gallup August 2015 poll, fewer than half (44%) of respondents in South Korea view dog meat unfavorably, and 27% reported having eaten it in the previous year. However, just two years later in 2017, following the implementation of the Models for Change program, there was a significant shift in public attitudes. Multiple news reports at the time indicated that nearly 70% of adult Koreans would no longer eat dog meat, with that number rising to 80% among teenagers—a figure later confirmed by a 2018 Gallup poll.

Despite the high number of respondents who no longer consumed dog meat, only around 40% in the 2017 survey were reported to support a legislative ban. The polling analysis highlights a key challenge that needed to be addressed to shift public opinion in South Korea and garner political will for legislative change. The issue was not that public eating habits needed to change—politicians were well aware that most Koreans did not eat dog meat, nor did they view dog meat favorably. Over the past decade, the number of households sharing their home with a dog or cat as pets has significantly increased in South Korea, with families now viewing dogs as companions, not food. The challenge was overcoming the reluctance to call for a ban that could impact individuals' freedom to choose. Polling indicated that the primary reason for opposition to a ban was not a strong attachment to dog meat, but rather a belief in the individual's right to make personal choices. However, continual exposure of the cruelty of the trade through Humane World's Models for Change program and campaigning from local groups helped enlist public support to overcome this challenge.

By September 2020, the disparity between the perceived importance of personal consumption rights and appetite for a ban had started to significantly shift. An opinion poll commissioned by Humane World for Animals Korea and conducted by Nielsen Korea showed that the majority of Koreans (84%) neither consumed dog meat nor intended to do so in the future, even if they had done so in the past. Survey results indicated that almost half of respondents (47.7%) did not believe that dog meat was associated with modern Korean culture.

The super-majority of citizens abstaining from dog meat consumption remained consistently high for the following years, with 86% refraining and over 57% of Koreans supporting a legislative ban in 2023. At this point, concern about animal cruelty became the primary motivator for supporting a ban,

SOUTH KOREA DOG MEAT SLAUGHTERHOUSE RESCUE, 2018. MICHAEL BERNARD/FOR HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

with the most significant attitude shift seen among people in their 40s and 50s—groups traditionally considered the primary consumers of dog meat. For example, by the time the legislative ban was proposed, 73% of people in their 50s agreed that *all* dogs—whether living in our homes or on dog meat farms—should be protected, and 64% in this age group cited animal cruelty as their main reason for supporting a ban on the dog meat industry.

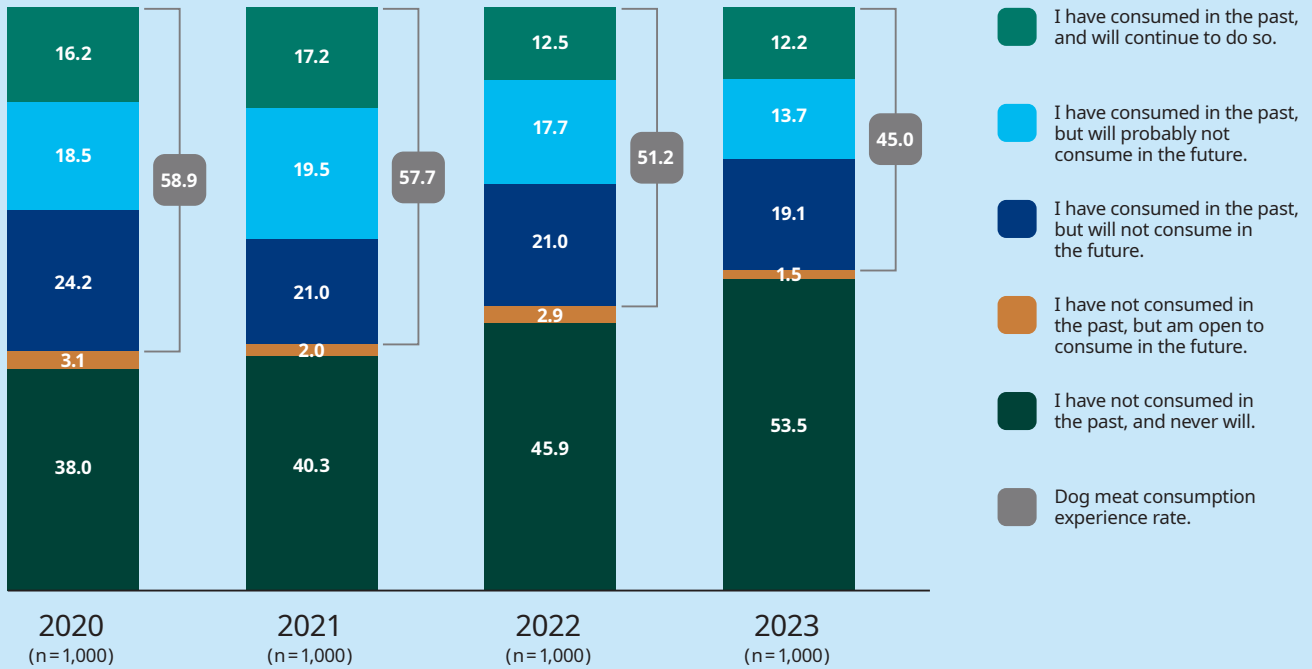
As noted in this report, there had been several notable occasions in the past where foreign media mischaracterized South Korean national pride as support for dog meat. First, during the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics, South Korea faced widespread international criticism for its dog meat industry. Similar backlash occurred during the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang and again during the 2022 Football World Cup when French actor Brigitte Bardot campaigned for a boycott due to dog meat consumption.

Despite efforts by authorities to suppress public displays of dog meat consumption, many media outlets reported a public backlash and increased support for the practice. However, there was more to this than met the eye. Orchestrated PR stunts by the dog meat farmer associations, such as handing out free dog meat to international sport fans, contributed to the illusion of widespread support. The dog farmer associations created a narrative that linked criticism of dog meat with criticism of South Korea, when in fact this was not the case at all. Public defense of dog meat, such as seen then, was more about defending national pride than about defending the practice of eating dog meat.

Risks to human health from consuming dog meat had also become an increasing concern, particularly for those consumers who regularly eat dog meat. Media coverage of dog farm rescues showed that conditions on many dog meat farms were unsanitary. Antimicrobial resistance also became a concern in an industry that often resorts to the indiscriminate use of antibiotics to reduce animal disease and mortality. One study conducted by Konkuk University found that 65.4% of dog meat sold in markets contained traces of at least one type of antibiotic. Of 93 dog meat samples taken from 25 traditional markets across the country, 60 were found to contain antibiotics. According to Humane World for Animals Korea's 2023 public attitudes survey, more than half of the respondents expressed concerns about the safety and hygiene of dog meat.

The super-majority of citizens abstaining from dog meat consumption remained consistently high for the following years, with 86% refraining and over 57% of Koreans supporting a legislative ban in 2023.

Dog meat consumption surveys 2020-2023



5. Government actions to date

For many years, there was a political stalemate in South Korea regarding the issue of ending the dog meat industry, with most politicians unwilling to discuss or even acknowledge the industry publicly. The industry's ability to operate under the radar for years, with countless illegal dog farms and the grim reality of suffering kept hidden from the public eye, prevented an open and honest debate on the issue. However, as media scrutiny increased, public concern grew, and opinion polls began to show a lack of support for the industry, the foundation was laid for governmental action and a shift in political will.

In April 2018, Incheon District Court in Bucheon fined a farmer under the Animal Protection Act for unlawful animal slaughter, ruling that meat consumption was not a legal justification to kill dogs.

There were numerous and growing examples of local authorities and courts clamping down on the dog meat industry. In April 2018, the Incheon District Court in Bucheon fined a farmer under the Animal Protection Act for unlawful animal slaughter, ruling that meat consumption was not a legal justification to kill dogs. That same year, in August, Seoul City announced an end to dog slaughterhouses at Kyungdong Market in Dongdaemun. In September, the Supreme Court overruled a lower court decision to allow dog electrocution (the favored killing method of the industry), declaring the method "too cruel." In November, Seongnam's city council, with the assistance of Humane World for Animals Korea and other partners, closed the Taepyeong dog slaughterhouse, the largest in the country.

The following year, in July, Humane World for Animals Korea and other groups teamed up with authorities to shut down Gupo dog meat market in Busan, notorious for being one of the country's largest markets selling chilled dog meat as well as live dogs killed to order. In October, the mayor of Seoul declared the city free of dog slaughter after he secured a pledge from the remaining dog meat shops to stop dog slaughter on-site. In November, our partner group KARA won a Supreme Court case against a dog farmer who had electrocuted around 30 dogs in violation of the Animal Protection Act.

SOUTH KOREA DOG MEAT BAN PETITION HAND-IN, 2018. HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

These local government actions, court decisions and dog meat industry closures were far more reflective of the country's evolving attitudes toward dog meat than the international headlines that confused national pride with support for the practice during global sporting events.

The political momentum for a ban on the dog meat industry began to build under President Moon Jae-In, a known dog lover who, in 2017, a adopted a shelter dog named Tory to join his other dog, Maru. During his election campaign, Jae-In had stated that the dog meat industry should be phased out. In 2018, a statement from the Blue House acknowledged that such a phaseout would need to consider the livelihoods of those employed in the industry. This was a pivotal moment, as it marked the first time a sitting president had publicly elevated the issue of dog welfare and discussed the strategic dismantling of the dog meat industry.

By this time, Humane World for Animals Korea's Models for Change program had been running for more than three years, and it was well positioned to show how the president's desire to consider farmers' livelihoods could be achieved in a phaseout strategy. It became clear that our Models for Change program could play a crucial role in breaking the political deadlock.

By September 2021, President Moon felt emboldened enough to suggest that the time may be right for the country to consider banning the dog meat industry. In November 2021, the government set up a task force of officials, civilian experts, representatives of the dog meat industry and local animal advocacy groups to make recommendations on the next steps toward ending the dog meat industry. Humane World for Animals Korea, along with other Korean animal advocacy groups, joined this task force to form a coalition to assist and advise the dog meat task force during deliberations.

The political groundwork for a dog meat ban was firmly laid when Yoon Seok-yeol won the presidential election in March 2022. Throughout his campaign, President Yoon made several statements confirming his support for a ban on dog meat, contingent on achieving social consensus. A dog lover himself, Yoon shared his home with four dogs, one a Jindo (a breed traditionally associated with dog meat). He pledged his personal opposition to eating dogs and his commitment to a phaseout plan. His wife, first lady Kim Keon-hee, also made no secret of her love for animals. In an interview with the *Seoul Shinmum* newspaper, she called for an end to dog meat, saying, "Not consuming dog meat is ultimately an expression of respect for man's best friend, and it also means respect for life."

South Korea Dog Meat Farm Rescue (Farm 16) 2020. Jean Chung/For Humane World for Animals

On Jan. 9, 2024, in a historic vote at the National Assembly, a ban on the dog meat industry was unanimously approved.

In April 2023, an amendment to the Animal Protection Act's Reinforcement Regulation confirmed that killing dogs for human consumption was no longer permissible. By June of the same year, Democratic Party Assembly Member Jeoung-ae Han introduced a Special Act legislative bill to ban the dog meat industry by outlawing the breeding and slaughter of dogs for human consumption, including prohibiting dog meat farms, dog slaughterhouses and the sale of dog meat throughout South Korea. The bill, which included prohibitions on dog meat farms, dog slaughterhouses and the sale of dog meat throughout South Korea, was crafted with the assistance of Humane World for Animals Korea. Critical to its success was the inclusion of a government-funded livelihood transition package to support dog farmers in transitioning to alternative businesses.

Han's Special Act was the first of a series of similar bills introduced by prominent politicians from the People Power Party and the Independent Party. The Ministry of Agriculture also issued a statement of support and leadership on the issue, further strengthening the momentum for legislative change.

By November 2023, the South Korean government introduced a government bill to ban the dog meat industry, which included a three-year phaseout period and a finance package to help legally registered dog meat farmers, traders, slaughterers and restaurant owners transition or close their businesses. By December, the bill had completed its first committee vote at the National Assembly. By January 2024, it had completed voting at the Legislation committee. On Jan. 9, 2024, in a historic vote at the National Assembly, a ban on the dog meat industry was unanimously approved, making the breeding, slaughter and sale of dogs and dog meat for human consumption illegal starting in 2027, with penalties of up to three years imprisonment or a fine of up to 30 million KRW (approximately 22,000 USD)[2] for those who violate the law.

[2] Calculated using *oanda.com/currency-converter* on June 25, 2025.

Timeline of government actions, Models for Change farm closures and campaign activities

2015

Models for Change farm closures

1. **Jan 2015**
2. **Mar 2015**
3. **Sept 2015**
4. **Dec 2015**

2016

Dog meat market and farm closure

2017: Closure of Moran market dog meat sector

Models for Change farm closures

5. **Feb 2016**

2017

Legislation

2017: Several bills proposed to ban dog-meat-related activities: APA amendments; Livestock Act amendments; Wastes Control Act amendments

Models for Change farm closures

6. **Jan 2017**
7. **Mar 2017**
8. **Jun 2017**
9. **July 2017**
10. **Nov 2017**

Public awareness and celebrity engagement

2017: Korean-American actor Daniel Henney became a prominant advocate

Public awareness and celebrity engagement

2017: UK TV star Pete Wicks supported dog rescue operation

2018

Dog meat market and farm closure

Nov 2018: Closure of Taepyeong-dong slaughterhouse

Models for Change farm closures

11. **Mar 2018**
12. **Jun 2018**
13. **Oct 2018**

Public awareness and celebrity engagement

2018: South Korean electro band Love X Stereo help Humane World save more dogs from the industry

Public awareness and celebrity engagement

2018: I LOVE TOSAS event at a shopping mall in Seoul

2019

Government

Oct 2019: Seoul declares itself a 'dog slaughter free' city

Dog meat market and farm closure

July 2019: Closure of Gupo Dog Meat Market

Models for Change farm closures

14. **Jan 2019**
15. **Sept 2019**

Public awareness and celebrity engagement

2019: TV dog trainer Hunter Kang (Hyung-wook) joined Humane World to rescue dogs

Public awareness and celebrity engagement

2019: #NameMe, an online public voting campaign to rename meat dogs

Government actions

Campaign activities and Models for Change farm closures

2020

Dog meat market and farm closure

Dec 2020: Rescue operation of approximately 100 dogs from an illegal dog farm in Gimpo

Models for Change farm closures

16. **May 2020**

Models for Change farm closures

17. **Oct 2020**

Public awareness and celebrity engagement

2020: Korean digital comics events to call for an end to the dog meat industry during Bok Nal

2021

Government

Sep 2021: Statement by President Moon Jae-in proposing the possibility of a dog meat ban. Delivered seven months prior to his leaving office, this statement influenced the inclusion of the dog meat issue in subsequent presidential manifestos.

Dog meat market and farm closure

Apr 2021: Collaborative action with the local authorities to rescue dogs from an illegal farm in Yongin

Dog meat market and farm closure

Aug 2021: Jindo Island rescue, where an illegal farm had been breeding and slaughtering Jindo dogs for human consumption for over 20 years

Public awareness and celebrity engagement

2021: My Healthy Diet campaign with vegan chefs to promote plant-based recipes to replace dog meat soup

2022

Government

2022: Government introduces Comprehensive Animal Welfare Plan

Government

2021-2022: Major presidential candidates include a commitment to tackle the dog meat industry, stressing the requirement for societal consensus

Dog meat market and farm closure

July 2022: Collaborative action with a local group at an illegal dog meat farm in Ansan City

Public awareness and celebrity engagement

July 2022: Social media campaign #LeaveitInthePast, with a famous animal behaviour trainer and veterinarian Chehyun Seol

2023

Legislation

Jun-Oct 2023: Multiple proposals on various ways to ban the dog meat industry were proposed to the National Assembly

Legislation

Apr 2023: APA revised to include stricter penalties for animal abuse and tighter regulations on pet sales and ownership

Models for Change farm closures

18. **Mar 2023**

Public awareness and celebrity engagement

May 2023: *Beyond Prejudice*, a rescue dog portrait exhibition at Seoul Metro Art Centre in collaboration with award-winning photographer Sophie Gamand

Public awareness and celebrity engagement

July 2023: *Beyond Prejudice* exhibition held at the National Assembly, with National Assembly members attending

2024

Legislation

Jan 2024: Comprehensive ban on slaughter and sale of dog meat passed, including a three-year phaseout period

6. Key aspects of South Korea Dog Meat Ban Special Act

The ban on dog meat consumption in South Korea is a comprehensive legislative effort aimed at fostering a culture of respect for life and promoting the coexistence of humans and animals. It explicitly prohibits the rearing, breeding, slaughtering, trade and sale of dogs for human consumption. Key provisions as set out by the law include:

1. **Government support for transition:** The government is required to establish policies and provide administrative and financial support to help phase out the dog meat industry. This includes aiding farmers, traders and restaurant operators in closing or transitioning their businesses, as well as managing dogs relinquished by farmers who cease their operations.
2. **Phaseout period:** A three-year phaseout period has been set to allow time for the industry to wind down. However, the law immediately bans the establishment of new dog meat farms, slaughterhouses and facilities for processing or cooking dog meat.
3. **Reporting requirements:** Industry operators must report their businesses within three months of the law's enactment and submit their phaseout plans within six months. The government will provide support for their closure or transition to alternative businesses.
4. **Penalties for violations:** Any violation of the law, such as slaughtering dogs for consumption, will result in penalties of up to three years of imprisonment or fines of up to 30 million Korean won (~22,000 USD). Unauthorized new dog meat operations are subject to fines of up to 3 million won (~2,200 USD).

This law represents a significant step in South Korea's efforts to end the dog meat industry and aligns with growing public sentiment and the government's desire to ensure humane treatment of animals while supporting those impacted by the industry.

Article 1 (Purpose)
This Act aims to contribute to the realization of animal welfare values that promote respect for life and harmonious coexistence between humans and animals by prescribing necessary matters to end the consumption of dogs as food.

Article 3 (Responsibilities of the State and Local Governments)

1. The State and local governments shall establish and implement policies necessary to end the consumption of dogs and provide administrative and financial support as needed.

Article 5 (Prohibition of Rearing, Slaughter, Trade, and Sale for Dog Consumption Purposes)

1. No one shall rear or breed dogs for the purpose of consumption or slaughter them for such purposes.
2. No one shall distribute or sell food products made from dogs (including carcasses or meat), or food products made using dogs as ingredients for food consumption purposes.

Article 6 (Basic Plan for the Phasing Out of Dog Meat Consumption, Etc.)

1. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs shall establish a basic plan for the phasing out of dog meat consumption (hereinafter referred to as the 'Basic Plan') that includes the following:
    a. Matters related to the establishment and coordination of policies for ending dog meat consumption.
    b. Matters related to the closure or conversion of business of farmers, dog meat slaughter and traders, and dog meat restaurant operators.
    c. Matters related to the protection and management of dogs whose ownership has been relinquished by farmers.

South Korea Dog Meat Farm (Farm 18) 2023. Jean Chung/For Humane World for Animals

Article 9 (Prohibition of New Operation of Dog Meat Farms, Etc.)

After the enactment of this law, no one shall establish or operate any of the following facilities as a new or additional operation: dog meat farms, facilities for slaughtering or processing dogs, and facilities for cooking dog meat.

Article 10 (Reporting and Submission of Implementation Plans)

1. Farmers, dog meat slaughter and traders, or dog meat restaurant operators must report the facility name, address, scale, and business details to the mayor or governor of a special self-governing city, special self-governing province, mayor, county executive, or district mayor (referring to the mayor of a district in the case of a self-governing district) within three months from the date of promulgation of this law.
2. The head of a City/Province may review the details of a report filed under paragraph 1 and refuse to accept the report if it is not appropriate. In such cases, the head of a City/Province shall notify the relevant person of refusal of acceptance and the grounds therefore without delay.
3. A person filing a report pursuant to Paragraph 1 shall submit a Dog Meat Phase-out Implementation Plan (hereinafter referred to as the 'Implementation Plan'), which includes matters related to business closure or transition, to the mayor, county governor, or district chief within six months from the date of promulgation of this Act and shall faithfully implement it.

Article 11 (Support for Closure)

1. The State or local governments must provide support necessary for closures reported under Article 10.

Article 12 (Support for Transition)

1. The State or local governments must provide support for the transition of operators who submit implementation plans under Article 10, including necessary facilities and operational funds.

Article 17 (Penalties)

1. Any person who violates Article 5, Paragraph 1, by slaughtering dogs for consumption shall be subject to imprisonment for up to 3 years or a fine of up to 30 million won.
2. Any person who falls under any of the following subparagraphs shall be subject to imprisonment for up to two years or a fine of up to 20 million KRW:
   a. A person who violates Article 5, Paragraph 1 by breeding or propagating dogs for the purpose of consumption.
   b. A person who violates Article 5, Paragraph 2 by distributing or selling food made from dogs or using dogs as raw ingredients for cooking or processing for the purpose of consumption.

Article 18 (Fines)

1. Fines of up to 3 million won shall be imposed on any person falling under any of the following categories:
   a. Those who violate Article 9 by installing or operating facilities for new or additional operations.

7. Rationale for a ban on the dog meat trade across Asia

South Korea's example demonstrates that ending the dog meat industry is achievable. Furthermore, there are compelling reasons why the trade should be ended in Asia. First, the dog meat trade increases the spread of rabies and other zoonotic diseases. Dogs are often transported in unsanitary, overcrowded conditions and slaughtered without oversight. Many are moved illegally across borders, with unknown origins, health status and vaccination histories, posing threats to both animal and human health. Second, the trade is unethical. Dogs face extreme cruelty at every stage of the trade. The trade is also linked to illegal activities including pet theft, causing emotional distress and undermining public trust and safety. Third, food safety is compromised. Dog meat is often sold without proper inspection, raising concerns about food safety. Fourth, the trade can harm a country's international image. As global concern for animal welfare grows, the dog meat trade is seen as incompatible with modern, progressive values. Finally, public opinion is shifting, especially among younger generations, who increasingly view dogs as companions, not food. These arguments form a strong case for why the dog meat trade should end.

7.1 Spread of rabies

One of the most critical reasons for banning the dog meat trade across Asia is that it poses significant health risks. Although rabies was not a major issue for South Korea, as the country is rabies-free, it remains a significant concern for other countries in Asia where dog meat is consumed, such as Viet Nam, China, Indonesia, North East India, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and North Korea. The dog meat trade is a major facilitator of disease spread because the animals often come from unknown origins and are of unknown vaccination and health status, thus increasing the likelihood of disease spreading within populations and transmission to those associated with the trade. Furthermore, rabies transmission in dog populations is largely mitigated through canine rabies vaccination programs, which are essential for herd immunity, ensuring that most of the dog population is vaccinated and therefore immune to the disease. This creates a barrier against rabies and reduces the overall risk of rabies transmission to humans. However, the illegal trade of dogs for consumption undermines these efforts because it

EXTREME ANIMAL MARKET AT TOMOHON, NORTH SULAWESI, INDONESIA, 2018. DOG MEAT FREE INDONESIA

removes vaccinated dogs for the trade, lowering herd immunity (a 70% minimum vaccination coverage is considered essential for rabies eradication) and facilitating the spread of rabies. Both the World Health Organization and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have set targets to eliminate rabies by 2030. For countries in Asia to meet these targets, they must significantly reduce the number of rabies cases in both humans and animals. The Global Alliance for Rabies Control has highlighted the need to tackle the dog meat trade in relation to eliminating rabies. A ban on the trade is an essential step toward preventing the spread of rabies, improving public health in the region and meeting rabies elimination targets.

The dog meat trade is a major facilitator of disease spread because the animals often come from unknown origins and are of unknown vaccination and health status.

7.2 Food safety and spread of diseases

A ban on the trade would protect public health and safety. The slaughter and sale of dog meat at slaughterhouses, restaurants and markets throughout Asia is often conducted under filthy and unsanitary conditions. Animals are usually slaughtered in crowded, makeshift facilities where there is no proper waste disposal, blood management or cleaning procedures. These facilities are often in overcrowded, poorly ventilated areas and are a breeding ground for diseases such as rabies and cholera, which can be passed to humans. The absence of traceability in the meat supply chain also adds to these risks, making it difficult to ensure that the meat is free of contamination or disease.

Dog meat stall in Yulin, China, May 2025. Vshine

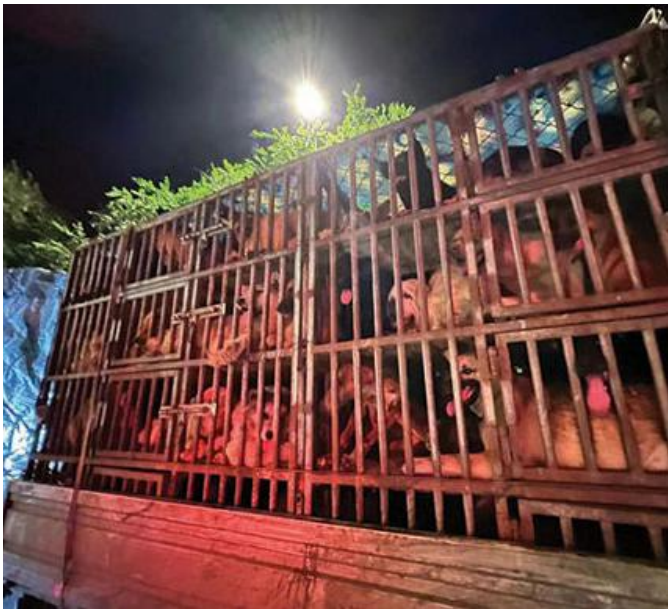
Langowan market, Sulawesi, Indonesia, 2021. Dog Meat Free Indonesia

The equipment used for slaughter is often unsanitized and the meat may be handled without adequate protection, increasing the risk of contamination from various pathogens. For example, in South Korea, the excessive use of antibiotics has been documented in dog meat farms, raising concerns about public health and food safety. Additionally, according to Humane World for Animals Korea's 2023 survey, sanitary issues throughout the dog meat production process were the second-most popular reason for supporting a ban on the dog meat industry. The risk is not only a concern for local public health but also for the broader environment, as diseases can spread rapidly between animals and humans, across borders and globally. COVID-19 has highlighted the critical importance of tracing disease outbreaks and identifying the origins of the disease, a task that is impossible to do in the case of the dog meat trade. The conditions seen in the trade—poor sanitation; large, complex and often informal trade networks; and abused animals in poor health—also present potential for the emergence of novel pathogens, which could endanger public health.

Despite the evident risks to public health, enforcement of food safety regulations in the dog meat trade across Asia is often inadequate. Authorities either lack the resources or political will to properly monitor and regulate slaughterhouses, restaurants and markets involved in the trade. This lack of government action perpetuates the cycle of unsafe practices and leaves the public vulnerable to food-borne illnesses and other serious health risks.

7.3 Illegal mass movement of dogs across borders

The illegal mass cross-border movement of dogs for the meat trade often involves organized networks of traffickers who smuggle animals from supply hot spots to demand hot spots. These traffickers typically exploit gaps in regulatory enforcement, moving animals covertly through informal



Dog meat truck, China, 2024. Vshine

routes to evade border control. In some countries this is done openly, with law enforcement agencies rarely taking action due to either lack of resources to confiscate animals or lack of political will to stop traffickers despite cross-border regulations being contravened. Many countries have strict regulations regarding the movement of animals, including requirements for vaccination certificates, veterinary health checks and quarantine measures to prevent the introduction and spread of diseases. However, animals of unknown health and vaccination status as well as origin continue to be transported across borders, posing serious health risks.

7.4 Pet theft and societal unrest

The demand for dog meat often leads to an increase in pet theft, with animals being stolen from homes or stray and community dogs being snatched from the streets. This not only causes immense suffering for the animals but also undermines the bond between people and their pets. In many regions, this has led to a public outcry and a call for strong animal protection laws. The practice of stealing pets and community animals for consumption contributes to societal unrest as people feel a sense of betrayal when their beloved dog is abducted for the meat trade. This has been highlighted by incidents of violence between community members and dog thieves, which has been documented in several instances.

7.5 Animal cruelty at every stage

The dog meat trade is a cruel and inhumane practice that subjects dogs to extreme suffering throughout every stage of the process. The practice directly violates the Five Freedoms, a set of international principles designed to ensure the welfare of animals. The trade also disregards animal sentience. Studies have shown that dogs are highly intelligent and emotionally complex. They experience fear, pain and distress just as humans do. Yet at every stage, the dog meat trade causes both extreme physical and psychological harm to these animals.

Dogs are often lured into traps with food or other bait, forcibly captured using nets or lassos, or even shot with poisoned darts. Once caught, they endure long, harrowing journeys, crammed into cages on trucks, motorcycles or cars.

Police intercepted a dog meat truck in 2021 in Central Java, Indonesia. Yoma Times Suryadi/AP Images for Humane World for Animals

Throughout the journey, they suffer extreme stress, thirst, hunger and fear. In some countries, dogs are tightly restrained in hessian sacks with their muzzles bound, further intensifying their distress.

Transported for miles without food, water or rest, many sustain injuries due to rough handling and overcrowding, and even death due to suffocation. Upon arrival at their destination, they are confined in holding areas, either caged or still tied in sacks, until slaughter. Compounding their torment, many dogs witness others being slaughtered before them, further deepening their fear and trauma.

The killing process itself is brutal, often carried out while the animals are fully conscious. Methods include bludgeoning, hanging, torching and drowning, causing prolonged agony and suffering. These practices frequently violate animal welfare and slaughter regulations.

7.6 Negative impact on tourism

The trade and consumption of dog meat has potential negative consequences for tourism. Many international tourists[3] find the practice of eating dog meat (and cat meat) disturbing. A ban could serve as a positive signal to tourists and tourism companies that a country is committed to animal welfare, food safety and rabies control, fostering a more positive and progressive image that could boost tourism and economic growth, considering tourism is a key industry in several of the countries where the dog meat trade is present.

7.7 Negative impact on society

A ban on dog meat represents a symbolic step forward for the moral and ethical development of human society.

In recent years, law enforcement agencies around the world have formally recognized that violence against animals can be a strong predictor of violence against people. A substantial body of documented evidence indicates that individuals who perpetrate violence against humans frequently initiate their criminal careers with acts of animal cruelty.

Exposure to the dog meat trade can also deeply affect children psychologically. Witnessing dogs, often seen as companions, being cruelly captured, transported for slaughtered may cause trauma, confusion and emotional distress. Longer-term exposure can desensitize children to violence, undermine empathy toward animals and blur moral boundaries. Protecting children from exposure to such cruelty and fostering a culture of compassion supports healthier individuals and more humane future societies.

In summary, banning the dog meat trade is essential for protecting public health and welfare, eliminating illegal activities, preventing animal cruelty and protecting future generations. Additionally, rising public awareness and growing opposition, particularly among younger generations, coupled with potential economic and tourism benefits, further reinforces the need for an end to the dog meat trade.

Dogs awaiting slaughter at a dog meat market in India 2024 Mishi Aggarwal/ For Humane World For Animals

[3] Vietnam's Capital Asks Residents to Stop Eating Dog Meat | TIME *time.com/5393540/vietnam-dog-meat-hanoi*

8. Recommendations for ending the dog meat trade

Ending the dog meat trade in Asia is a multifaceted issue, encompassing economic, social, cultural and legal factors. However, countries and territories where bans already exist, such as South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan, the Philippines, Hong Kong and more than 106 localities in Indonesia, demonstrate that progress is possible. Based on the steps taken by these countries and territories, we recommend the following actions to address the dog meat trade. These recommendations can also be applied to ending the cat meat trade.

8.1 Strengthening legal frameworks and closing legal loopholes

Governments must enact and rigorously enforce laws that prohibit the transportation, slaughter, sale and consumption of dogs for the meat trade. While some countries already have animal cruelty laws that could be applied to the trade, these regulations often require updating and more consistent enforcement. Both national and local governments should actively demonstrate their commitment by introducing specific provincial directives and regulations aimed at ending the trade. Closing down illegal dog meat operations is a crucial step in signaling a clear and unified opposition to this practice.

A foundational legal reform necessary for banning the dog meat trade is the official recognition of dogs as companion animals, distinct from livestock. Removing dogs from livestock classifications is essential to underscore the principle that they are not food animals and must be protected from slaughter. This legal distinction not only reinforces their role in society as companions but also ensures their welfare is appropriately addressed in policy and practice. Failure to make this separation leaves room for legal ambiguity, which the dog meat trade can exploit—ultimately undermining efforts to protect animal welfare.

In addition, regional and international cooperation is vital to address the cross-border trafficking of dogs destined for the meat trade. Countries and jurisdictions should collaborate by sharing best practices, legal strategies and data, thereby strengthening enforcement mechanisms and disrupting illegal supply chains. A coordinated approach ensures that progress in one region is not undermined by inaction or loopholes in another.

8.2 Increasing enforcement and penalties

Enhancing the capacity of law enforcement agencies to investigate, prosecute and dismantle illegal operations linked

SOUTH KOREA DOG MEAT FARM RESCUE (FARM 6) 2017, JEAN CHUNG/FOR HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

to the dog meat trade is essential. This includes providing specialized training for relevant enforcement personnel such as police, inspectors and local authorities to recognize and respond effectively to reports of illegal dog meat activity.

Border control agencies should also receive targeted training on applicable national and regional laws, enabling them to intercept and confiscate animals being trafficked across borders. To ensure the welfare of confiscated dogs, formal partnerships should be established with reputable public or private shelters and pet boarding facilities capable of providing immediate care, rehabilitation and rehoming support.

Strict penalties should also be introduced and enforced for those involved in illegal activity linked to the trade, including significant fines and custodial sentences. Stronger legal consequences will serve as a meaningful deterrent and reinforce the seriousness of these violations in the eyes of both the public and potential offenders.

8.3 Conducting public awareness campaigns

Public awareness campaigns play a crucial role in shifting attitudes toward the dog meat trade by educating communities about the serious health risks involved. Highlighting the potential for disease transmission such as rabies and other zoonotic illnesses can be one of the most effective ways to discourage consumption and participation in the trade. When people understand that consuming dog meat poses real threats to individual and public health, they are more likely to reconsider their involvement.

Equally important is exposing the inherent cruelty of the trade. Showing the harsh realities faced by dogs in the trade can generate empathy and public demand for change. Additionally, dispelling common myths about the supposed health benefits of dog meat, many of which lack scientific evidence, can be countered through accessible, fact-based information.

"I Love Tosas" event in Seoul, South Korea 2018. Humane World for Animals

Together, these strategies (raising awareness about the serious health risks, challenging misinformation and exposing the cruelty involved) can significantly influence public opinion and build support for ending the dog meat trade.

Celebrating the closing of a dog meat restaurant and slaughterhouse in Dong Nai, Viet Nam, in 2024. Donna Gadomski/Humane World for Animals

8.4 Supporting alternative livelihoods

For individuals involved in the trade, such as farmers, restaurant owners and slaughterhouse operators, there must be comprehensive support to help them transition to alternative, sustainable livelihoods. This support can take the form of financial assistance, vocational training or government-backed low-interest loans. NGOs are well-positioned to assist with the development and implementation of livelihood conversion programs. At Humane World for Animals, we have demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach through our Models for Change program, successfully helping former dog and cat meat farmers, restaurant owners and slaughterhouse operators shift to more humane and sustainable occupations. Many of those who have made the transition now serve as powerful ambassadors for change, with their success stories inspiring others to leave the trade behind for new livelihoods.

8.5 Engaging with local communities

Engaging with local communities to address cultural practices and attitudes toward dogs is essential to creating lasting change. Understanding the underlying reasons why communities consume dog meat, as well as their perceptions of the risks associated with the trade, allows for the development of targeted, culturally sensitive strategies to address these issues effectively.

Promoting responsible pet ownership and implementing measures to protect animals from being stolen for the trade are crucial components of any intervention. Efforts should also focus on discouraging the breeding and sale of dogs for the trade, as well as preventing the abandonment of pets. Neutering community and street animals is another vital strategy, along with low-cost neutering of pets, which can help reduce the number of vulnerable animals at risk of being captured for the dog meat trade.

The Bok Nal festival in South Korea in 2024 included a memorial to dog meat dogs. Haewon Lee/Humane World for Animals

Empowering local animal protection groups and youth-led movements to take the lead in shifting societal norms and behaviors is key. These groups are often best positioned to drive meaningful, grassroots change from within their local communities, amplifying the impact and sustainability of broader efforts.

8.6 Promoting health and safety standards

Disease prevention efforts must incorporate public messaging about the dangers of trafficking, butchering and consuming dogs. These practices pose significant public health risks, including exposure to rabies and other zoonotic diseases. Dog meat often comes from unknown sources through unregulated trade routes, making it especially dangerous for human consumption.

Efforts should also focus on dispelling harmful myths, such as the belief that dog meat has medicinal benefits, while promoting only safe and hygienic food practices.

Local authorities have a critical role to play and must enforce existing food safety, slaughter, transport, animal welfare, and environmental regulations. Action should be taken against those who violate these laws to protect public health and animal welfare.

8.7 Implementing low-cost sterilization

Implementing sterilization programs for street dogs, alongside accessible, low-cost sterilization services for pet and community dogs, should be a central component of efforts to end the dog meat trade. Research consistently shows that mass killing of dogs and long-term sheltering are neither sustainable nor cost-effective strategies for controlling stray dog populations. By humanely reducing the dog population, these sterilization programs limit the number of animals vulnerable to being captured for the trade. In addition to curbing supply, sterilization helps reduce stray animal suffering, supports healthier dog populations and reduces the spread of disease and human-dog conflicts. Sterilization also contributes to overall community well-being.

8.8 Supporting animal shelters and adoption

Supporting and funding shelters that care for dogs rescued or confiscated from the meat trade must be an integral part of efforts to end the trade. These shelters not only provide vital care and rehabilitation but also play a crucial role in finding adoptive homes for rescued animals. To ensure long-term success, there must be a strong focus on building a culture of adoption where adopting dogs from shelters is normalized and widely supported.

Cheongju dog farm rescue dogs awaiting adoption 2025. Courtesy of HansCare

Investing in public awareness campaigns to address misconceptions and barriers around shelter adoption is essential. Promoting the value and resilience of shelter dogs through positive storytelling, community engagement and education can help to increase rehoming rates.

Educating adoptive owners about responsible pet ownership is also essential to ensuring they fully understand their obligations and are prepared to provide lifelong care. This helps to reduce the risk of neglect and abandonment and keeps dogs safe from the dog meat trade.

8.9 Promoting cultural change

Campaigns can have powerful short- and long-term impacts by highlighting the role of dogs as companions and valued family members rather than viewing them as food. Promoting the deep, positive relationships between dogs and humans helps foster empathy within societies toward animals.

Engaging national celebrities and social media influencers to speak out about the importance of compassion toward dogs can further amplify these messages. Their influence can help in shifting public opinion, especially among younger audiences.

At the Olympic Games in 2018 in PyeongChang, South Korea, protesters objected to the dog meat industry. Humane World for Animals

Integrating animal welfare education into school curricula is also a vital step in fostering compassion and responsible behavior toward animals from an early age. School-based programs that teach children about the role of dogs as sentient beings, companions and family members rather than as food can lay the foundation for lasting cultural change.

8.10 Fostering strategic partnerships and building coalitions

To create a unified, powerful movement, it's essential to foster strategic partnerships and build broad coalitions to advocate for a ban on the dog meat trade. Such collaboration ensures that a wide part of society is represented and allows for the combining of resources, expertise and influence. A coordinated approach significantly strengthens advocacy efforts and increases the likelihood of meaningful policy change.

In South Korea, for example, local animal protection groups formed a national coalition to collectively push for a dog meat ban. The government in South Korea also established a dedicated task force including representatives from relevant ministries, animal welfare organizations and the dog meat industry to develop a road map for ending the trade. This approach involving multiple interested parties highlights how collective action can lead to tangible progress.

By building public support, encouraging community-based change, providing viable livelihood conversion programs and enforcing existing laws, progress can be made.

South Korea Dog Meat Farm (Farm 4) 2015. Frank Loftus/For Humane World for Animals

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9. Conclusion

South Korea's journey to end the industry is a powerful example of what can be achieved when public sentiment, policy and compassion align. The country and its people have shown that not only is it possible to dismantle this industry, but it can be done in a way that protects livelihoods and promotes a more compassionate society.

As public attitudes shift and awareness of animal sentience grows, momentum is building across Asia for an end to the dog (and cat) meat trade. While economic and cultural barriers remain, South Korea has proven that change is possible and what was once considered a "cultural" practice can evolve to embrace empathy and respect for life.

Humane World for Animals is proud to have played a part in this historic change. With continued collaboration between governments, industry, communities and animal welfare advocates, we can build on South Korea's success and work toward a future where no dog (or cat) suffers as part of the dog and cat meat trade in Asia or anywhere else.

By continuing to push for compassionate policies and societal change, we can look forward to a future in which the dog meat (and cat meat) trade is no longer tolerated and where society increasingly embraces compassion and respect for all animals.

CHEONGJU CITY DOG MEAT FARM, 2025. JEAN CHUNG/FOR HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS

Our mission

Together, we tackle the root causes of animal cruelty and suffering to create permanent change.

Humane World for Animals™

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