



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2016/0164, 8 September 2016

South Korea and the dog meat trade

This pack has been prepared ahead of the debate to be held in Westminster Hall on Monday 12 September 2016 at 4.30pm on an e-petition entitled

'Urge the South Korean Government to end the brutal dog meat trade'.

The subject for the debate was selected by the Petitions Committee, and the Member in charge is Oliver Dowden.

Nikki Sutherland
Oliver Bennett
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Contents

1.	The petition	2
2.	Summary	4
3.	Press release	6
4.	Parliamentary material	8
4.1	PQs	8
4.2	Debate	9
5.	Useful links	10

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. The petition

The petition **'Urge the South Korean Government to end the brutal dog meat trade'**:

In South Korea, an estimated 5 million dogs are slaughtered every year for their meat. During the 1988 Seoul Olympics, the South Korean government hid all the dog meat restaurants from the sight of international media to avoid criticism, yet the dog meat industry is still thriving today.

Without any investigation, the International Olympics Committee (IOC) authorised South Korea to hold the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang. 30 years have passed but the situation remains the same, if not worse.

Our government should speak out and urge the IOC and South Korean government to respond to the dog meat issue and make the dog meat trade illegal.

The World Dog Alliance have produced an important documentary in response to the brutal trade across Asia.

<http://youtu.be/9YcxNXPkLc>

The petition reached 102,131 signatures before it closed on 10 August 2016. The Government responded:

The United Kingdom continues to raise the issue of the ongoing consumption of dog meat in the Republic of Korea and most recently debated the issue in Parliament on 5 November 2015.

The British Embassy in Seoul has raised the issue of cruelty towards animals on numerous occasions with the South Korean authorities and explained that the UK public and parliamentarians would like to see Korean regulation that would bring the practice to an end. We will continue to seek further opportunities to raise the issue, in particular as we approach the Winter Olympics in 2018, and will monitor developments in the practice in the Republic of Korea.

We believe that it is necessary to work with governments around the world to build agreement on animal welfare standards and to phase out cruel and inhumane farming and trapping practices.

We welcome the work that non-governmental organisations, such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Change for Animals Foundation and the Humane Society International undertake with authorities of other countries to improve standards of animal welfare.

Parliament debated the ongoing consumption of dog meat on 5 November 2015. The debate covered three main themes: the treatment of animals, the health risks associated with eating dog meat; and the UK's role in reducing the trade and tackling animal welfare issues. As we noted at that debate, while we cannot intervene directly in the protection of wildlife abroad, we will

continue to raise our concerns on specific animal welfare issues with the relevant authorities.

In a number of countries, including the Republic of Korea, the sale and consumption of dog meat is legal. In the absence of international norms, laws or agreements governing the trade and consumption of cat and dog meat, the United Kingdom has no legal grounds to intervene or take trade measures against those countries where consumption of this meat is regarded as normal practice.

The practice of eating dog soup (posintang) during Boknal (three days throughout the summer) in the Republic of Korea is declining rapidly as attitudes change and the vast majority of Koreans eat samgaetang instead (chicken and ginseng soup). The trend is such that dogmeat eating is likely to die out of its own accord, though that day could still be some years off.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

As the petition reached over 100,000 signatures, it was considered for debate by the Petitions Committee and it was selected to be debated on Monday 12 September 2016 in Westminster Hall at 4.30pm.

2. Summary

Scale of the industry

An estimated 2 million dogs are slaughtered and eaten each year in South Korea, according to [International Aid for Korean Animals](#), a registered charity. It stated that over 20,000 restaurants in South Korea serve dog meat as “boshintang (a chunky stew) or gaesoju (a tonic)” which is sold by “as many as 9,000 Gungangwon health food stores”¹. It estimated the dog meat trade generated \$2 billion in revenue annually.

The charity stated that dog meat consumption has a long history in South Korea, but did not become commonplace until the Korean War in the 1950s. It went on that at some point over the last century, the practice of eating dog meat was taken up by a few older men for “mythical health benefits”.²

World Dog Alliance claimed that 60% of South Koreans eat dog meat. However, the demand for dog meat is said to be declining among younger people. It was reported recently that 20% of men in their 20s consume dog meat, indicating a decline in the practice.³

Welfare concerns

There are thousands of dog meat farms throughout South Korea, varying in size from small enterprises to large-scale intensive farming systems with thousands of dogs. According to the Change for Animals Foundation, the dogs on these farms “are often kept crammed in row after row of barren cages, and left to stand on metal bars for their entire lives, fed on leftover food waste, and offered little protection from the burning hot sun in the summer or freezing conditions of South Korea’s winter”.⁴

According to the Animal Welfare Institute, a US-based animal welfare charity, it is believed by many South Koreans that the more a dog suffers before it dies, the better the meat will taste owing to the belief that adrenaline in the system makes the meat taste better. Dogs are therefore often subjected to cruelty before being slaughtered. Most farmed dogs live less than a year.⁵

Animal welfare law

According to the Animal Welfare Institute, South Korean law is ambiguous on the legality of the dog meat trade with efforts to reign in

¹ [Dog meat in Korea, International Aid for Korean Animals](#) [accessed August 2016]

² [History of dog meat in Korea, International Aid for Korean Animals](#) [accessed August 2016]

³ [Spared from the cooking pot, 200 dogs bred and kept in cages to be sold as food are rescued from meat farm in South Korea, Daily Mail](#) 27 April 2016

⁴ [Ending the Dog Meat Industry in South Korea, Change for Animals Foundation](#) [accessed August 2016]

⁵ [The South Korean Dog Meat Trade, Animal Welfare Institute](#) [accessed 9 September 2016]

the practice being “half-hearted”.⁶ The Institute cited one legal analyst as saying:

...there is no clear law governing matters relating to dog meat. While there is no explicit recognition of dog meat as legitimate food and of dogs as animals fit for human consumption, neither is there a clear ban on sale or slaughter of dogs for food.⁷

The charity stated that the dog meat industry persists under the belief that “consumption dogs” differ from “companion dogs”. South Korea’s *Animal Protection Amendment Act 2007* prohibits some of the cruel methods used to slaughter the dogs, but the law, according to the charity, is “widely ignored”.

⁶ [The Dog Meat Trade, Animal Welfare institute](#) [accessed August 2016]

⁷ Ibid

3. Press release

Animals Asia

How South Korea manages to “farm” dogs where others have failed - will shock you

16 July 2015

By Jill Robinson, founder and CEO of Animals Asia

It's an intriguing question as to how South Korea has managed to farm dogs for their meat when doing so has proved impossible elsewhere.

In fact, consistent failed attempts to farm dogs form the very basis of our calls not to regulate the industry, but to end dog meat consumption altogether.

From the outside, however, it might appear that South Korea has found a way to make it work. In truth their dog breeding for the meat industry is so far from humane - it's at the very boundaries of what could even be considered farming.

Dogs are being bred by creating hellholes where every cost is shaved to a minimum with the dogs repeatedly the victim of each cut in costs.

In China, Animals Asia recently published [the findings of our in-depth, four-year investigation into dog meat](#) in 15 cities in eight provinces . We looked at how it is sourced, processed, and consumed. One point that was obvious throughout our investigations was that there is no such thing as a Chinese dog farming industry. The costs were too high - especially while illegal theft of companion animals remains a far cheaper supply.

Is South Korea really much better?

In discussion with Lola Webber, the co-founder of [Change for Animals Foundation](#), we worked through the differences between China and South Korea and how the latter had achieved the “impossible” with large-scale dog breeding specifically for the meat market.

Firstly, South Korea is smaller in size and population than China. It has stronger laws that are upheld more rigorously. As a result, more people are willing to abide by them. There are fewer cases of stolen or lost dogs mysteriously disappearing.

Animals Asia has long referred to the dog meat industry being characterised by criminality and cruelty. In South Korea, the criminality is less evident but an increase in cruelty compensates.

This month sees the beginning of the three annual Bok Nal days in South Korea- Chobok, Jungbok, and Malbokat 10-day intervals across July and August. These are considered the hottest days of the lunar calendar when, thanks to a combination of tradition and cultural practice, dog meat consumption peaks. As the global spotlight turns to Korea, what does this “farming” look like?

The truth is it's a horror show. The dogs are kept in cramped cages for their entire lives with zero care. They're fed human food waste, sometimes other animals that may have died from diseases, even dead dogs. Breeders usually choose dog breeds like "yellow dogs" or "tosas" which have become considered "meat dogs" in South Korea. They are incredibly stoic and seem to be able to survive the most horrendous environments and still produce a lot of puppies twice a year.

These are then supplemented with pet industry "waste" - dogs that are either unsold or can no longer breed. They're further added to by dogs once considered cherished pets but now no longer wanted.

South Korea has long been rabies free which is one less concern for the breeders. Beyond this farmers illegally inject their own dogs with vaccines from very dubious sources. In order to profit from them they only need to keep them alive a year. They frequently fail even that target, with mortality rates suggested as being between 10% and 40%.

Despite this "meat" being reared in such horrific circumstances it still commands a high price. A medium to large-scale tosa is likely to raise more than \$250 wholesale, and a single bowl of boshingtang (dog meat stew) can cost \$15.

The system defies logic and the belief that the dish will "balance the body's heat" during the hot summer months is a marketing claim that cannot be backed up. The breeding of the dogs can barely be described as "farming". Likewise the final cost does not reflect the quality of the goods. The meat industry is adept at marketing but no one could ever claim this was "grass-fed", "organic" or even desirable.

As pet ownership rises rapidly and people's tolerance for animal cruelty decreases, opinion polls show there is growing opposition from within South Korea and the call for an end is becoming louder. Via the [Asia for Animals](#) coalition we are adding our voice - as can you.

We know the health claims are dubious while the actual risks to health are not. Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines have made dog meat eating illegal - largely because there is no humane way to breed dogs. Don't be fooled by thinking South Korea has proved otherwise. This is sheer inexcusable exploitation.

Like local animal welfare groups in South Korea we want to see the Bok Nal days ended. But, more than that, we all want to see dog meat eating ended. Please help us. [Sign the Asia for Animals Coalition petition.](#)

4. Parliamentary material

4.1 PQs

Asked by: Jarvis, Dan

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to the South Korean government on animal welfare as part of the preparations for the Winter Olympics in 2018.

Answering member: Mr Hugo Swire | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I wrote to Ambassadors in the Asia Pacific region in January 2016 to review our approach and assess what progress could be made in the future. Our Ambassador has raised the issue of cruelty related to the dog meat trade with the South Korean authorities, explaining that UK Parliamentarians and the public would like to see regulation that would bring this to an end. As we approach the Winter Olympics in 2018 we will continue to monitor and raise as appropriate.

HC Deb 04 April 2016 | PQ 32056

Asked by: Ffello, Robert

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department has taken or plans to take on the practice of consuming and selling dog meat for consumption in addition to the steps he set out in the debate in the House on the dog meat trade of 5 November 2015.

Answering member: Mr Hugo Swire | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Since the debate on 5 November my Department has not received any representations from any diplomatic missions in the UK on the dog meat trade, nor have Ministers made representations to their counterparts abroad. As highlighted during the debate by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge), I am contacting our Ambassadors in the countries concerned to review our activities in this area.

The Government is committed to raising the standards of animal welfare at home and abroad. I raised animal welfare issues during my visit to the region in February and will continue to make representations when appropriate.

HC Deb 15 December 2015 | PQ 19550

Asked by: Burden, Richard

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with his counterparts in (a) China, (b) Vietnam and (c) South Korea about the dog meat trade in those countries.

Answering member: Mr Hugo Swire | Department: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Government is committed to raising the standards of animal welfare at home and abroad. Whilst there are no international norms, laws or agreements governing the trade and consumption of dog meat, we believe it is necessary to work with governments to gain agreement on animal welfare standards and phase out cruel and inhuman farming practices.

I raised the importance of animal welfare with the Vietnamese government during my visit in February. Our Ambassador in Seoul has raised the issue of cruelty related to the dog meat trade with the South Korean authorities, explaining that UK Parliamentarians and the public would like to see regulation that would bring this to an end. Ministers have also raised the issue with Chinese counterparts, and we continue to work alongside the authorities there to help protect the welfare of stray animals.

I will be writing to all relevant Ambassadors about this issue in due course and the Government will consider a review of how we interact with various international organisations on dog meat consumption, specifically on the issue of health.

HC Deb 18 November 2015 | PQ16263

4.2 Debate

Backbench debate: [Dog Meat Trade](#)

HC Deb 05 November 2015 | Vol 601 cc1212-1227

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm151105/debtext/151105-0003.htm#15110531000003>

5. Useful links

Dog and Cat Meat Consumption: Kennel Club Briefing [accessed September 2016]

<http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/our-resources/kennel-club-campaigns/dog-meat/dog-and-cat-meat-consumption-kennel-club-briefing/>

Kennel Club: Dog Meat [accessed September 2016]

<http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/our-resources/kennel-club-campaigns/dog-meat/>

International Aid for Korean Animals

<http://koreananimals.org/>

Change for Animals Foundation: Ending the Dog Meat Industry in South Korea [accessed September 2016]

<http://www.changeforanimals.org/ending-dog-meat-in-sk>

Animal Welfare Institute: The Dog Meat Trade [accessed September 2016]

<https://awionline.org/dogmeat>

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