



Hanoi, 11 May 2020

**Subject: The threat of the Dog and Cat Meat  
Trade to Lao PDR, the region and global safety**

To: The Honorable Ambassador Sengphet Houngbounnuang  
Laotian Embassy in Hanoi, Vietnam  
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Hanoi, Vietnam  
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Dear Honorable Ambassador,

We are writing on behalf of the **Asia Canine Protection Alliance (ACPA)**, representing international animal welfare and conservation organizations from across the globe, including members based in a number of Southeast Asian countries. We are writing regarding our concerns about the dog and cat meat trades in Laos and from Laos to Vietnam and the threat they pose to public health, in light of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The trades also represent a gross abuse of globally established standards of animal welfare.

Around the world, countries are united in the collective struggle against the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. Governments have been urged by the United Nations and NGOs across the globe to take immediate action to permanently close wildlife markets as the suspected source of COVID-19. However, despite the worsening situation of the pandemic globally and throughout Southeast Asia, with 55,563 cases of coronavirus infections in the region to date, the mass trafficking, sale, and slaughter of domesticated animals often sold alongside wild animals in Laos and to its neighbour continues unchallenged.

The trade in dogs and cats for human consumption is very significant across Vietnam, involving the slaughter and consumption of an estimated five million dogs and one million cats every year across Vietnam. We have learned that a large proportion of the dogs supplied to Vietnam come from Laos. The dog meat trade is proven to facilitate the transmission of deadly notifiable diseases such as rabies, and is reliant on illegal operations and a lack of enforcement of existing laws and

regulations in place to protect public health, animal welfare, and prevent disease transmission. The dog and cat meat trades in Laos and Vietnam continues to operate in the growing face of mounting calls from governments, human and animal health experts, and other key stakeholders to tackle this activity.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak emerged from Wuhan, China in late December 2019, the Chinese authorities have announced that the sale of all terrestrial wildlife for consumption would be prohibited nationwide; in addition, in April, the Chinese cities of Shenzhen and Zhuhai have introduced city-wide bans on dog and cat meat consumption, and the national government has publicly proposed that dogs are considered companion animals not livestock, and should be removed from the list of animals considered “food”.

The dog meat trade involves the mass sourcing of animals of unknown health status, cross-country transport, and import into cities such as Hanoi and elsewhere under highly stressful conditions and close confinement. The sale of dog and cat meat is often closely intertwined with wildlife, and there is no way to ensure meat sold from animals in these conditions is safe for human consumption. We believe it is only a matter of time before the next deadly zoonotic disease emerges. The World Health Organization (WHO) has already explicitly highlighted the trade in dogs for human consumption as a contributing factor to the spread of rabies, and that 70 percent of global disease-causing pathogens discovered in the past 50 years came from animals. The trade also directly undermines Vietnam’s rabies control strategy and disrupts any attempts at developing herd immunity through mass canine vaccination programs.

This is very true, and indeed across Asia there are dog/cat meat trade prohibitions in place, including in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore.

However, during this unprecedented time, it’s imperative that governments act on behalf of their citizens and the world to protect public health and prevent the next pandemic from occurring. Therefore the action required is for a comprehensive and nationwide ban to be introduced and strictly enforced across Laos. On behalf of the undersigned organisations around the globe and the many millions of members they represent, we respectfully ask that the Laos government to take **urgent preventative measures** by:

- Immediately and permanently banning the trade, slaughter, and consumption of dogs and cats in Laos.

- Issuing a public statement regarding the public health dangers of the slaughter and consumption of dogs and cats.
- Issuing legislation to ban the trade in dogs between Laos and Vietnam.

Yours sincerely,



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