

# Report

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# China's Dog Meat Trade:

The shocking truth that shames the Olympic hosts



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## A Disturbing One Voice Investigation

China's multi-billion dollar clean-up of Beijing ahead of its 2008 summer Olympic Games has been widely publicised. Eager to stage a "green" Games and present a new face to the watching world, the authorities have accomplished 20 environmental targets in Beijing including relocating 200 factories to reduce the city's chronic air pollution and building a wind farm on its outskirts.

Far less well known is Beijing's pre-Olympics closure of its many dog meat restaurants. But then, these are places the Chinese authorities are anxious that the wider world does not see.

Common in cities across China, these roadside restaurants specialise in dishes made of almost every conceivable part of dogs including heads, legs, testicles and innards. The animals destined to be killed for the table are often kept on display outside restaurants in cramped cages.

Until recently, many if not most of these animals have been supplied by a substantial dog breeding industry. But a major undercover investigation in China by One Voice suggests that dogs being killed for meat are increasingly likely to be one-time pets or strays supplied piecemeal from various sources – indeed, some of these tragic animals are still wearing collars. Whatever their origins they are brutally slaughtered, often on the pavements outside restaurants, in ways that are an affront to civilisation in this or any other century.

Our undercover team spent three dangerous weeks infiltrating China's dog meat industry, risking arrest by state police or worse at the hands of the sometimes shady people who lurk behind the trade. The team won the trust of three dog meat restaurants and a dog processing factory to gather information and film images of the horrifying cruelty caused by this vile industry. They found atrocities at every turn, atrocities One Voice hopes will persuade the world to join its call for China to introduce animal protection laws. For here is a supposedly modern nation that can host an Olympics, yet has no animal welfare legislation whatsoever.

'Beijing's dog meat restaurants may have been closed for the Olympics,' says one of our investigators, 'yet just 20 miles outside you will still find these places in abundance. The reality of China's dog meat business that we uncovered shows the Olympic clean-up for what it really is: superficial and cynical cosmetic surgery. Beneath it lies the wholesale betrayal of Man's closest animal companion in the most despicable of ways.'

## The History of Dog Eating in China

The Chinese have eaten dogs for at least 7,000 years. The flesh has been valued for its flavour and protein and for supposed health benefits, which include a belief that it "warms the blood" during winter. Dog meat is also considered to be beneficial to the yang, the hot, extroverted aspect of human nature. Yet dogs have also been kept as pets by the Chinese for several thousands of years: many emperors honoured them as "court officials" and treated them to every luxury.

Today dogs are eaten throughout China, with the exception of Hong Kong: dog meat has been illegal here since 1950. It is most commonly eaten in the north-eastern and southern provinces. Overall, demand for dog meat would appear to be relatively small. In 2000, around 100,000 tons – equivalent to several million animals – was consumed by China's 1.3 billion population.

In recent times much dog meat has been produced commercially by dog breeding farms. Their numbers – the total is unknown – were boosted in the 1990s by substantial government financial support for new dog farming ventures, with reports of as many as 15,000 animals being reared on individual, often intensive, farms. Many animals, however, are reared on a much smaller scale, often

as a sideline by people seeking to supplement their income. Various breeds are used: until recently St. Bernards were preferred by many farmers for their rapid growth, bulk and flavour. Today, however, they appear to have fallen from favour because of their substantial feeding costs.

Farmed dogs endure short, cramped, miserable lives. They are usually slaughtered on site and brutal deaths await them. Reportedly, many are tortured or bled out slowly to increase their terror: this results in adrenaline-rich meat that, according to folklore, makes the men who eat it more virile.

Our investigation suggests that, today, dog farms may be in decline, at least in Eastern China. We were unable to find any still in operation. At one redundant farm west of Qingdao our team saw rows of small brick stalls that once housed around a hundred breeding bitches. The owner told us that until a few years ago it cost him three yuan (0.3euros) to farm each kilogramme of meat, which he sold for six yuan. Today prices have fallen to only three or four yuan per kilo, making dog meat farming uneconomic. This was supported by the owner of a dog meat processing factory, who told us his production is decreasing as the consumption of beef and chicken increases.

Instead, dog farming is being replaced by more opportunistic methods. It seems that increasingly, meat dogs are being reared ad hoc by some households, while unwanted pets and strays are being rounded up en masse by professional “collectors.” This sinister dog collection trade sells animals directly to meat processing factories and restaurants. But the public also act as suppliers: we saw several restaurants advertising for dogs.

## A Factory Like No Other

With its high brick walls and metal gates Mr Wang’s rural factory south-west of Jinan, Eastern China, looks like many others the world over. But what goes on inside this factory shames not just China but humanity itself. The factory, named Ruen Chun Yuen (“Dog Place”), is one of an unknown number in China that slaughters dogs and processes their meat.

Mr Wang once bred dogs for the meat trade but complains it took too much time and wasn’t lucrative enough. Now he buys dogs wholesale and claims to be Eastern China’s biggest processor. When our investigators met him at his factory he proudly demonstrated his grisly business

We were shown the outdoor killing compound, where two dozen bedraggled looking small to medium dogs were crowded into two cages. Nearby was a covered area with hanging racks, a blood-draining area, de-pelter, soaking bath and a boiling pot, with freezer rooms packed with dog meat and body parts, including skinned heads and testicles.

The caged dogs were shaking pitifully: their terror was well founded. Using long neck pliers, a worker dragged one struggling dog from its cage and battered it unconscious with blows to the head and muzzle. He dragged it to the killing area, stood on its head, inserted a finger into its neck and bled the animal, which shuddered spasmodically as its blood gushed across the concrete. Despite this it remained alive. The butcher left it lying in unimaginable distress and pain for seven agonising minutes while he killed several other dogs. Then, finally, he battered it to death and put its body in the boiling pot to loosen the fur. “The fur won’t come off if a dog’s still alive when you boil it,” we were told.

The casualness with which such brutality was meted out was almost as horrific as the suffering it caused. We watched dogs arriving for slaughter packed in cages on motorbikes and small tractors. Each was lifted out roughly by the neck with neck irons, howling and struggling at the pain this caused. At one point a small terrier escaped as it was unloaded and tried to flee. The half-dozen



# The Dog Factory



**Last Journey:** Another pitiful consignment for the dog factory.



**Beginning Of The End:** New arrivals await processing.



**No Mercy:** An alsatian is lifted out painfully with neck irons.



**Death Row:** A caged dog awaits slaughter.



**Final Horror:** A collar is removed from the body of a former pet.



**Skinned:** Carcasses hang ready for butchering.



workers laughed as it was dragged back with the neck irons firmly clamped around its body, yowling in pain and terror.

Some of these dogs – a mix of terriers through to great Dane crosses – were wearing collars, suggesting they were previously family pets.

The scale of this factory and its cruelties made it the most disturbing place we visited in China. It reduced our team's middle-aged Chinese driver almost to tears. He wasn't the only Chinese we met who was distressed and disgusted at the treatment of animals in his country, holding out hope that if our evidence reaches enough ordinary people such horrendous cruelty will not be tolerated.

## Cruelty On The Menu

Chinese consumers aren't limited to factory-killed, frozen dog meat. Across the country they can dine at roadside dog meat restaurants where animals are freshly killed for the table. The establishment our team visited at Zibo, Shandong Province, is typical.

As with many Chinese dog meat restaurants the dogs at this one are on display in cramped cages outside on the pavement. They are openly and brutally slaughtered there too. When we visited, 10 caged dogs including alsatians and dobermans, were on display. They wagged their tails at us, a heartbreaking indication of close familiarity with humans, suggesting that they may have been kept formerly as pets.

Owner Mr Chu has run the restaurant for 20 years, obtaining his dogs from buyers who have "rounded them up in local neighbourhoods." He kills six or seven daily for the pot, butchering the corpses and turning them into "delicacies" such as "Five Spice Leg." His son told us that, to enhance their flavour, the dogs are fed the meat of other dogs prior to slaughter.

Mr Chu is proud of his restaurant and the care with which he markets it: he showed us his own frozen dog meat boxes depicting alsatians frolicking in a meadow. His concern, however, does not stretch to the animals he kills. They endure terrible deaths in the street outside, like innumerable others across this vast country, as our horrified team discovered on a dawn visit.

When we arrived Mr Chu was sharpening a knife lashed to a stick while a big pot of water heated on a fire beside the dogs' cages. Using a noose attached to a pole, his son pulled an alsatian-cross by the neck to the front of one cage. Mr Chu stabbed it in the chest with the knife. If he was aiming for its heart, he missed. The tragic dog screamed... an appalling, long drawn-out death had begun.

For several agonising minutes it stood in shock, pathetically licking the wound as its blood pooled beneath it yet, terribly, still wagging its tail at our team. Mr Chu stabbed it again. Its howls of pain and puzzlement were unbearable. He dragged it from the cage, blood dripping, tail still wagging, pushed it over and stabbed it yet again, twisting in the knife as it howled even more. Then the son dragged the dog to the pot and thrust it into the boiling water, still twitching with life.

The other dogs watched in terror... this happened just a metre from their cage, in their full view – in full view of passing pedestrians on this busy road, who included children walking to school. We saw similar brutality at other dog meat restaurants. At one we witnessed a cowering, whining dog being brutally beaten unconscious with a baseball bat and bled out on the pavement. Its blood ran beneath cages full of other terrified dogs awaiting slaughter.

This is the reality of the nationwide canine cruelty China hides behind its colourful Olympic facade. This is what happens when a nation hasn't even a single animal protection law.



## Restaurant

**Sickening:** A stabbed dog pathetically licks its own blood.



**Barbaric:** Beaten to death with a club.



**In the pot:** A dog's corpse is boiled.

## The Thousand-Dog Truck

While our investigation suggests that China's dog farms may be declining, a disturbing encounter by our team indicates that they are far from extinct.

Travelling on a motorway two hundred kilometres east of Chengdu, our team were horrified to see a large truck loaded with caged dogs. The cages, each one metre by two, were piled six deep by six wide: crammed into each were four middle-sized adolescent dogs of mixed breeds. Their uniformity of size and age suggests they had been farmed. There were more than 1,000 on board.

Shocked, the team followed the truck until a traffic jam caused them both to halt. Our investigators got out and approached the truck to talk to its crew. "As we approached, a stream of dog piss was gushing from the truck onto the tarmac," said one of our team. "The stench of perspiring dogs and their faeces became overpowering – this was cruelty on an horrific scale. It was so terrible it was almost surreal."

The truck's crew told us they had come from a town near Chengdu and were taking the dogs to Guangdong ...a non-stop, 48-hour drive away. They had no food or water. The truck crew quickly became suspicious of our team and challenged them, causing them to flee back to their car.

The encounter left our investigators traumatised and wondering how many of the animals could survive their hellish journey. As one puts it: "The sight of so many dogs crammed into tiny cages on a hot night, lit by car headlights, will haunt us for a very long time."

## Help Us End This Sordid Trade

The cruelty of China's dog meat industry logged by our team was the worst these experienced professional animal welfare investigators have ever seen. Every aspect of this industry is barbaric: inhumane transport conditions without food or water on unbearably long journeys; dogs crushed into tiny holding cages on arrival; dogs brutally handled and slaughtered without pre-stunning; dogs killed in full view of others, causing immense distress.

Our team met with some of China's small band of pioneering animal welfare activists working to raise awareness in the face of the country's regime. These crusaders - men, women, young and old - sobbed when they watched film we took of dog handling and slaughter. They voiced their shame that China permits such cruelty and angrily demanded change. One told us: "If you love animals in China you want to kill yourself every day."

The introduction of long-overdue animal welfare legislation in China would help end the cruelties of its dog meat trade – and its time is ripe. Across China, more people are questioning the treatment of animals in their country, particularly companion animals. Pet keeping is now on the increase, especially in urban areas, after being banned as "bourgeois" during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976: in 2002 it was thought that more than a million dogs were being kept as pets in Beijing alone.

Moreover, a 2004 survey part-funded by One Voice shows that more than three-quarters of Chinese people want a law to protect animals. Unless the wider world gives voice to their concern, dogs in China will continue to be callously brutalised in their millions: help us voice that concern by supporting our online petition and writing to the Chinese Embassy in your country.



## The Thousand-Dog Truck



**One truck, one thousand dogs:**  
A two-day journey to slaughter  
(photo taken with undercover camera).



**Misery:** No food, no water, no hope.