



# A summary report on Dog Meat Consumption in Cambodia

*Research conducted by Market Strategy and Development Co, Ltd.*

July 2020





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# 1. Introduction

FOUR PAWS is an international organisation working towards a vision of a world in which humans treat animals with respect, empathy and understanding.

In line with this mission, FOUR PAWS wanted to study the consumption of dog meat in Cambodia, as part of designing a campaign to end dog and cat meat trade in South-East Asia.

The problem was, that while much has been reported anecdotally about dog and cat meat consumption in Cambodia's capital, there was no tangible, factual data on the prevalence or rates of this consumption.

What FOUR PAWS needed to do was accurately assess current levels of consumption, the breakdown of consumption across various demographics, and the factors which drive people to consume the meat. This information would allow them to determine who to

target, assess what messages would be compelling to certain target groups and, at a later date, measure the success of any initiatives implemented.

To build this picture, FOUR PAWS undertook their own in-country investigation – the result of which is this report, conducted by research agency Market Strategy Development (MSD), a marketing and social research consulting firm in Cambodia that has undertaken a number of market, social science and socio-economic development research projects.

A more detailed version of this report is available on request to FOUR PAWS.

Currencies within this report are provided in US Dollars (\$) and Euros (€), and Cambodia Riel (KHR) where available.



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# 2. Methodology

## 1. Incidence Check

- Understand the prevalence of dog and cat meat in Phnom Penh.
- How does the consumption vary across different demographics?
- What are the barriers for non-dog & cat meat consumers?

## 2. Usage & Attitude Study

- What are the main drivers for those that consume dog & cat meat?
- What is the frequency of consumption?
- What are the occasions of consumption?
- In what locations is the meat consumed?

## 3. Focus Group Discussions & In-depth Interviews

- Qualitative deep dive on drivers, frequency & occasions for consumptions.
- Explore possible options for behaviour change.
- Further understanding of the market's business practices.

FOUR PAWS' research goals were wide-ranging, so MSD decided upon a sequential three-stage process using different methodologies in turn. They began with a **quantitative incidence check survey**, followed by a **usage and attitude survey**, ending with a qualitative phase employing consumer **focus group discussions** and **in-depth interviews** with sellers. Stage 1 and 2 of the study were conducted in Phnom Penh, while Stage 3 was conducted both in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap to try to detect any differences in behaviours and attitudes in both these population areas.

### Stage 1: Incidence check survey

Conducted using randomised sampling giving highly accurate representative data, this survey enabled the researchers to assess how prevalent dog and cat meat consumption is within Phnom Penh, and by extension, Cambodia as a whole – thus justifying the need for further research, and giving FOUR PAWS an understanding of who the consumers are in terms of gender, age, socio-economic status, education level, household location and occupation.

### Stage 2: Usage and attitude (U&A) survey

Following the incidence study, it was decided that as dog meat consumption was much more common than cat meat, that the remainder of the study should focus on dog meat as a priority. A usage and attitude survey was then employed to understand the frequency, locations, reasons and occasions on which people

consume dog meat. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling – people fitting the criteria of a regular dog-meat consumer were intentionally searched for by interviewers to fulfil representative quotas. The information gleaned through the U&A survey would provide FOUR PAWS with quantitative data to understand the driving forces behind the dog meat trade, and help shape selection criteria and concepts to be tested in the third stage of fieldwork.

### Stage 3: Qualitative understanding: focus group discussions and in-depth interviews

This was a qualitative 'deep dive' into the individual drivers of peoples' dog-meat consumption, using focus group discussions with consumers, and in-depth interviews with the owners of establishments selling dog meat.

**Focus group discussions (FGDs)** – lasting approx. 2 hours, in professionally equipped facilities, each with six respondents who had consumed dog meat, led through a discussion guide designed to elicit insightful responses exploring in greater detail the findings of Stages 1 and 2, and to test concepts of potential behaviour-change initiatives.

**In-depth interviews (IDIs)** – around 45 minutes, conducted with the owner of premises selling dog meat, in order to understand more of the business side of dog meat consumption.





Figure 1: Focus group room and adjacent observation room in Phnom Penh

## Survey instruments

### Questionnaires

Carefully crafted by the research team, written in English then translated and back-translated to check for inconsistencies.

### Computer-assisted surveying

Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) used to interview respondents and collect data, allowing for quicker interviewing times, no need for data, enabling logic checks and skip patterns reducing human error, secure data encryption, and audio recording for back-checks.

### Incidence survey

Just 5-10 minutes in length, to ascertain basic demographic information such as location, gender, age, income, marital status, educational level and occupation.

### U&A survey

20-30 minutes, establishing demographic information then going into greater detail on consumption habits and attitudes.

The information gleaned through the U&A survey would provide FOUR PAWS with quantitative data to understand the driving forces behind the dog meat trade

## Fieldwork management, quality control and ethical protocols

MSD followed stringent quality control procedures and considers research quality their highest priority. Their experienced staff undergo intensive training for work in the field, and a structured control system governs the entire fieldwork process, with unannounced spot-checks and 30% back checks on respondents. All data entry, processing and analysis was done internally, and for security data is immediately encrypted within the tablets and sent to a central server, to which only one person at the company has access.

## Findings

Through their comprehensive methodology, FOUR PAWS and MSD collected a vast body of data uncovering some fascinating patterns and observations regarding the behaviours and attitudes of dog meat consumers in Cambodia. The following section outlines these findings, and the valuable conclusions which might be drawn to inform FOUR PAWS' work:

## 1. Demographics

Due to the randomised sampling approach, respondent demographics can be confidently assumed to accurately reflect those of the whole city of Phnom Penh. Several points regarding demographics ought to be made:

**Age:** Due to Cambodia's recent history of civil war, the country has a very young population with approximately 60% under the age of 30. However, in the incidence study, due to the randomness of the sampling, only 40% of the respondents were below 30 (no one under the age of 18 was interviewed). This must be borne in mind in assessing the data.

**Gender:** 50% of our sample was male and 50% was female; however, males ended up a greater proportion of the sample of 25-29 year olds compared to females. If comparing under- 30s as a whole both genders are almost equal – consistent with the latest census of Cambodia.

**Income:** The majority of respondents (78%) earn a personal income of between \$101-400 (€91-361) per month, although there were some respondents making more than \$1000 (€903) per month. For household incomes 50% land between \$401-800 (€362-722) per month.

**Education:** Only 5% of incidence study respondents had no formal education; beyond this, the respondents are fairly equally split across those with primary (22%), secondary (24%), high school (27%) or higher education (24%).

**Occupation:** Although respondents' exact job positions were recorded, in order to analyse a sufficient sample size these occupations were divided into four broad categories: white collar (businesspeople, management,

professionals, office workers); blue collar (technical, agricultural, factory and service staff); students; and unemployed/homemakers.

## 2. Cambodian diet

The consensus among focus groups of dog meat consumers was that a healthy diet is one based on "the consumption of nutritious and organic foods that do not damage physical and mental health." The respondents believe that a balanced mixture of fish, meat, eggs, vegetables and fruit are key, that foods must be sourced from free-range or chemical-free farms, and that it is important to eat three regularly spaced meals a day.

Meat is perceived as compulsory within a Cambodian's food repertoire because they believe that protein gives them energy: it is typical to eat meat with every meal and certainly to never go a full day without eating some. This information was backed by other parts of the study, for example in the incidence study there were no vegetarians at all while in the U&A study of 63% of respondents said that they eat meat with every meal.

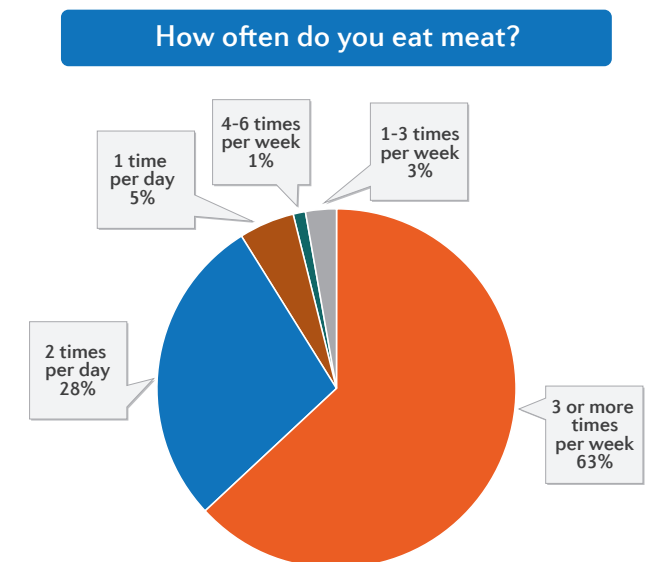


Figure 2: Frequency of eating any meat, among those who eat dog meat regularly

### 3. Overall meat consumption

When it comes to meat, **beef was the most preferred meat across all focus groups**, perceived as tasty, energy-giving and social. However, it was also noted that beef is more expensive so for some it could not be consumed regularly (this exclusivity making it all the more desirable). Despite beef being the favourite, **pork, chicken, and fish are eaten more often**, fish being perceived as a healthy meat option, generally used for daily household consumption, but without the energy-giving properties of the others.

The main reason for eating a particular meat seems to be accessibility. Nutritional factors such as health effects and benefits were found to be of relatively less importance.

Consumers reported little by way of concern about eating too much meat, although there was some concern amongst older respondents that it might be a driver for higher cholesterol and acidity.

From the incidence study, of all meats **cat is the most refused (76.8% of all respondents)**, followed by dog (59.8%) and then rat (50.8%). The reasons for these refusals were either that the animal is unclean or unhygienic, or for spiritual or karmic reasons.

### 4. Profile of a dog-meat consumer

Beyond a Cambodian's gender it is difficult to generalise about the type of person who eats dog meat. However, when weighting the data from the incidence study against the Cambodian population as a whole the profile of the person who is most likely to be found entering a restaurant serving dog meat is clear:

- Male
- Age 18 – 29
- Personal income of \$200-300 (€181-271) per month & household income of \$401-600 (€362-542) per month
- Has a secondary or high school education
- Is a blue-collar worker
- For those who live within Phnom Penh, likely to live in Sen Sok, Mean Chey or Dong Koa (outskirts of urban Phnom Penh).

**Frequency of consumption:** 53.6% of Phnom Penh residents have consumed dog meat in their life: 72.4% of males and 34.8% of females. More than half of those who have eaten dog meat have consumed it on more than 10 occasions and 12.2% of those interviewed consume dog meat regularly (having consumed within the past one month (P1M) and more than 10 times previously).

**Age and gender:** Amongst males, between 41% (45-49-year-olds) and 96% (35-39-year-olds) had eaten dog before; amongst females between 26% (50 years or older) and 53% (40-44-year-olds). Across all age groups consumption was higher amongst males.

There is little indication that the meat is more popular amongst older or younger Cambodians. It is evidently not a habit picked up later in life, or an old habit which is dying out. Nor is it a new custom to the country, being popularised by the young. It can be surmised therefore that **eating dog meat is rather a habit that fits a particular profile of consumer, regardless of age.**

When split by age group, the highest consumption amongst the P1M among males was in the 40-44-year-olds (26%) and amongst the females in the 18-24-year-olds group (7%). However, as previously mentioned, Cambodia has a very young population, so when weighting the data accordingly, under 30-year olds account for 53% of consumers of dog meat within the P1M. Thus, campaigns should be targeted at the younger generation as the larger overall group of consumers – who are also more likely to change their habits as they are less established, and will be more accessible through social media or educational programmes.

**Income:** Those who make \$801-1000 (€723-903) per month (36% of respondents) are least likely to consume dog meat, while respondents who make between \$401-600 (€362-542) per month (64%) are most likely to eat dog meat. However, due to most Cambodians falling into the income range of \$101-400 (€91-361) per month, this income segment contributes the highest actual number of people consuming the meat.

It is clear that dog meat consumption in Cambodia is not driven by income and is a 'product' that has been tried fairly equally across different socio-economic backgrounds.

**Education:** There is little difference between the percentage of those who have eaten dog meat when split by educational attainment, except a pattern that those who have no formal education have tried it less. This is partly due to a higher number of housewives who have no formal education.

**Occupation:** There are similar numbers of people from each occupation category who claim to have tried dog meat, but the sector containing the most regular dog-meat consumers is blue-collar workers (at 60%). There are consumers amongst professionals, freelancers, and businessmen, but often they prefer to purchase and take home rather than out. Housewives are the lesser consumers of the meat; whilst farmers appear to be high consumers.

	Sample size	Ever eaten	Eaten P1Y	Eaten P1M
Businessmen / Entrepreneurs	18	56%	22%	22%
Senior Management	2	0%	0%	0%
Middle Management / Managers	7	57%	29%	14%
Professionals / Specialists	25	52%	32%	24%
Executives and other office-based white collar	64	58%	31%	13%
Skilled technical workers	55	78%	53%	29%
Sales / Retail / Frontline Service	106	52%	25%	14%
Independent / Freelance / Micro business	41	51%	39%	27%
Operations / General workers	42	50%	26%	17%
Agriculture / Farming / Fishing	14	71%	29%	14%
Farm / Fishpond / Livestock & related operators	3	67%	67%	33%
Student	38	45%	18%	8%
Housewife	70	40%	6%	4%
Unemployed	15	47%	27%	27%

Figure 3: Consumption of dog meat by specific occupation and time

**Location:** Consumption of dog meat peaks in the outer urban area of Sen Sok, whereas households closer to the central business district (CBD) in Doun Penh and further to the north tend to consume less often.

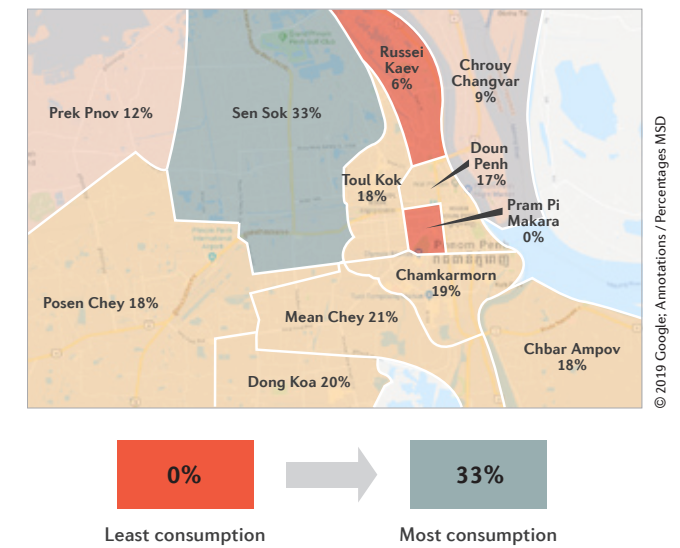


Figure 4: Heat map of dog meat consumers

**Effect of religion:** There is some correlation between those with stronger religious beliefs and a higher consumption of dog meat. MSD's hypothesis however, is that those who follow religion more strictly are likely to be more traditional in their behaviours, meaning their higher consumption of dog meat is due to their traditional outlook rather than as a result of religious belief itself. An exception to this correlation is among Muslims, who are forbidden to eat dog (all Muslims surveyed had never eaten dog meat).

**Reasons for not consuming dog meat:** Results from the incidence study suggest that the main factor which affects consumption of dog meat is the view that dog meat is dirty and unclean, both as an animal and as a meat for consumption. This was particularly high amongst women. As a secondary factor, people feel sorry for the animal or regard it as a pet.

There is little indication that dog meat is more popular amongst older or younger Cambodians



## 5. Frequency of eating dog meat

The respondents in the U&A study were sought out purposefully. Recruiters were sent out with the aim of finding those who ate dog meat at least once a month, so that the findings reflect such regular consumption. However, of these dog-eating respondents, the fact

that almost half consume the meat with a frequency of once a week or more does suggest that there is a significant group of 'hardcore' dog-meat consumers in Phnom Penh.

## 6. Timing of eating dog meat

More than half of the dog-meat consumers eat dog most frequently at weekends; the other 43% have no particular day on which they are more likely to consume. Almost no one questioned consumes more frequently on a weekday - likely due to dog meat being often consumed with alcohol.

However, it is actually during the week that the sellers make the most money. This is because after work is the primary time to eat dog meat (91.3% of consumers eat between 5.00pm-7.59pm), there often being a

workplace-based culture of eating dog meat together. Consumption at the weekend is also characterised by off-premise consumption which lowers the sellers' profits it reduces the on-premise drinking associated with the eating.

The general peak season for eating dog meat is during cold and rainy weather, as it is believed that the meat provides a warming effect on the body. On cold and rainy days, stores reported that their sales volume can increase by up to three or even four dogs.

## 7. Where to eat dog meat

Dog meat is most frequently eaten at the home of relatives or friends (52.0%) followed by specific dog-meat-selling locations (24.3%). Respondents were only asked where they ate dog, rather than where they purchased it from; however, from the focus group discussions it became evident that meat for consumption at home is usually bought from specific dog-meat stores and overall the sellers confirmed that most of their sales at the weekend were to people taking the meat away rather than eating in store. Typically, dog meat is sold from stores which offer exclusively dog-meat products and alcohol (beer or traditional herbal wine) - from our sample of 15 sellers only one sold food products other than dog.

It was found that women most frequently eat dog meat at home (84.3%) whereas men ate it in a variety of places. This is due in part to who the meat is consumed with, and social stigmas surrounding women's consumption of the meat.

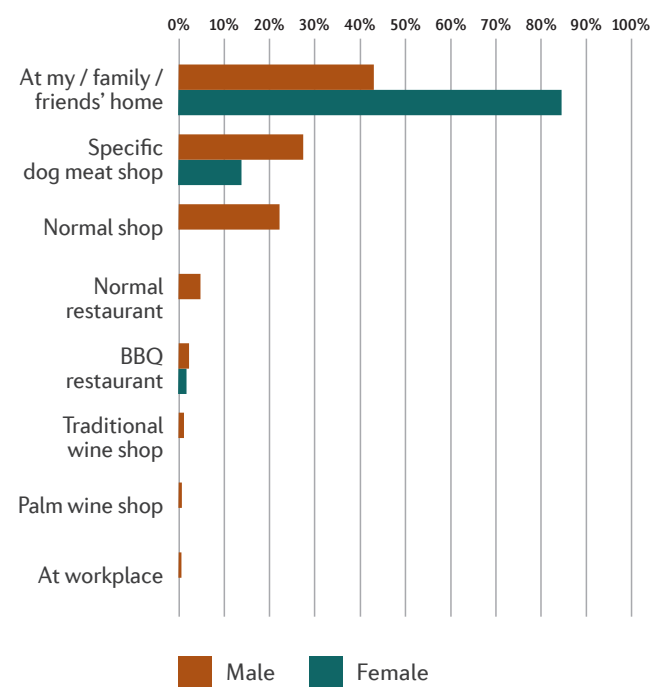


Figure 5: Location to consume dog meat most often, by gender



Figure 6: Dog meat is sometimes taken home as smaller cuts

## 8. Preparation of dog meat

Dog meat is primarily prepared in one of three different ways; from the U&A study 90.7% of consumers said that they usually eat it in grilled form, 56.0% in sour soup and 46.7% in a curry. As these dishes are small and shared in a group setting, consumption of dog in any particular form is not exclusive - someone could eat it prepared in all three ways during one session.

**The general peak season for eating dog meat is during cold and rainy weather, as it is believed that the meat provides a warming effect on the body**



Figure 7: Grilled dog meat

## 9. Serving of dog meat

Only 3% of those who eat dog regularly will consume it as their main meal. 93% say they most often eat it as an accompaniment to alcohol and only 4% will eat dog meat as a snack (i.e. as less than a main meal but without alcohol). This makes it clear that eating dog meat is not seen as a full meal, and that the consumption of alcohol is intrinsically linked to the consumption of dog meat.

Dishes of dog meat are considered to be cheap (around 5,000 KHR/\$1.25/€1.13), small, and most often purchased in multiples to be shared among a group,

snacked on throughout a drinking period. Dog meat is most often eaten without rice and is therefore not filling and not considered to be a whole meal. The dog meat stores interviewed had limited menus, typically only selling dog-meat products and alcohol, itself usually limited to just beer and traditional herbal wine.

Alcohol and dog meat are clearly intrinsically linked; however, it is not clear whether Cambodians consume dog meat because they are drinking alcohol or consume alcohol because they are eating dog meat.

## 10. Triggers to begin eating dog meat

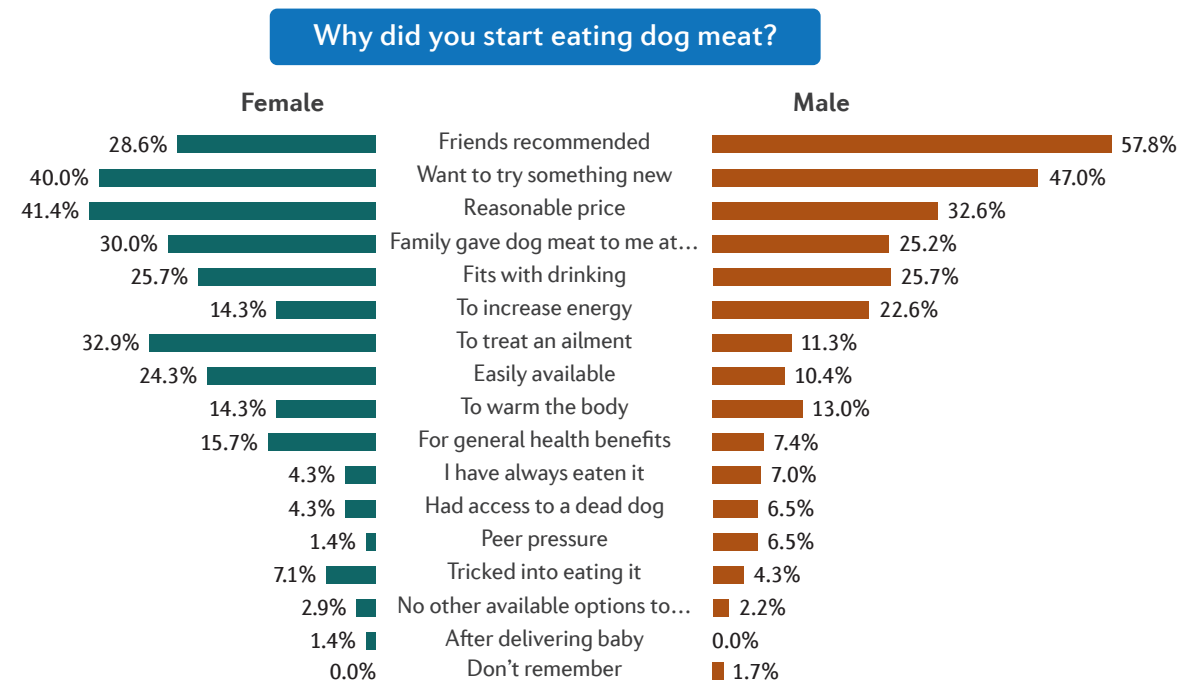


Figure 8: How dog meat consumption begins

Dog meat consumption seems to start from a young age: across all of the focus groups most ate dog meat for the first time at around 18-22, regardless of gender. Few start at a very young age; it is rather a habit picked up as they grow older, often being introduced by a friend.

Reasons for starting consumption vary between males and females; for more than half of males it was on a friend's recommendation (57.8%) compared to only 28.6% of women; for women a key reason was to treat

an ailment (32.9%) or for general health benefits (15.7%). Others begin eating it because it was served by their family as children.

In many cases the respondents originally had reservations about eating the meat and had to be invited a few times before they decided to do it. Two males and one female had been tricked into eating dog meat the first time they ate it, being told that it was beef. Evidently, peer pressure and social circles are a leading cause of peoples' first trial of dog meat.

## 11. Occasions for eating dog meat

Dog meat is not considered by Cambodians to be an everyday dish consumed at regular meals, but rather a special meat to be eaten on specific occasions – the colloquial naming of dog meat is 'sach pises' meaning 'special meat.' It is most commonly shared as an accompaniment to alcohol when gathering with friends, colleagues or family.

However, the meat is not consumed at every drinking occasion, but rather seen as something different to do perhaps one out of 10 instances of a group gathering.

Occasions of dog meat consumption are fairly similar between males and females. For both, the time to eat dog is usually when gathering with friends (77.1% for females and 95.2% for males), or often when rural residents visit friends or family in the city (40.0% for females and 17.4% for males).

Women tend to eat dog meat more as a main meal than men (12.9% vs. 7.8%), probably because women are consuming the meat at home far more often than men (84.3% vs. 42.2%) and when eating at home it would be the women who cook the meat, as a main meal.

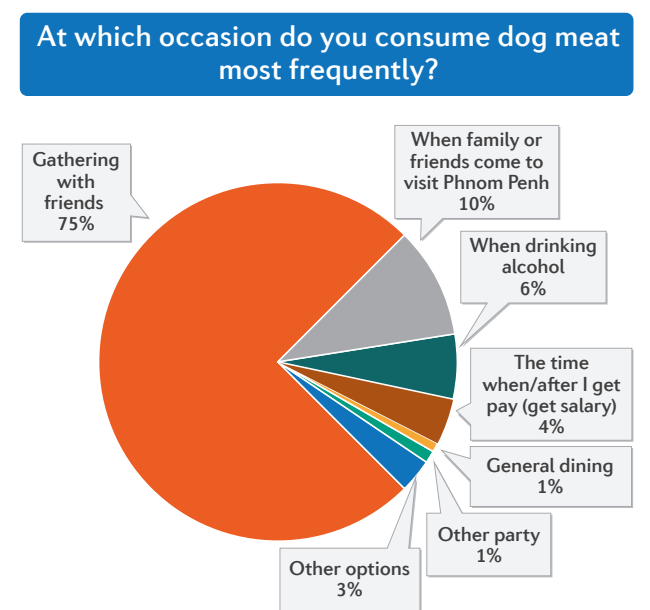


Figure 9: Occasions at which dog meat is eaten most frequently

## 12. Reasons for eating dog meat

Most consumers eat dog meat simply because it is perceived to have an appealing taste (80.0%), and is affordable (73.3%); it is popular among their friends and family (44.7%) or is recommended by friends (43.7%) and it is readily available (28.0%). And, differentiating it from other meats, it goes particularly well with alcohol (44.3%).

The top reason for eating dog meat is its relatively cheap cost - it costs approximately 5,000 KHR (\$1.25; €1.13) for a dish compared to beef at 10,000 KHR (\$2.50; €2.26). Other reasons mentioned by focus group respondents include:

- It offers a perceived warming effect on the body
- It does not increase acidity within the body
- It is either low in cholesterol or has the ability to lower cholesterol
- Perceived Medicinal reasons (sometimes with approval or recommendation from their doctor):

Aids sexual arousal in men, aids healing of scars (most often noted by women after childbirth), and increases the flow and easiness of periods.

Most people interviewed also said simply that the reason they eat it is they find the taste appealing, so they enjoy eating it simply as a change from other meats.

Most frequently consumers eat dog meat simply because it is perceived to be as having a pleasant taste



### Why do you consume dog meat nowadays?

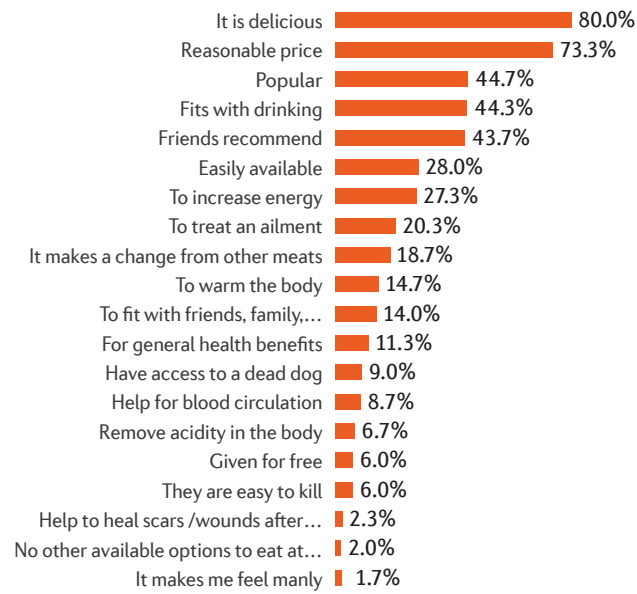


Figure 10: Reasons for continued eating of dog meat

#### 'Trigger statement' testing:

In order to change behaviour, efforts will have to be made to shift perceptions of the meat from positive to negative. Using feedback from the U&A survey, a list of concepts or 'trigger statements' were developed to explore the reasons for eating dog meat - which might help shape efforts to shift perceptions towards the negative.

The trigger statements and the focus groups' responses were as follows:

##### a. Eating dog meat warms the body

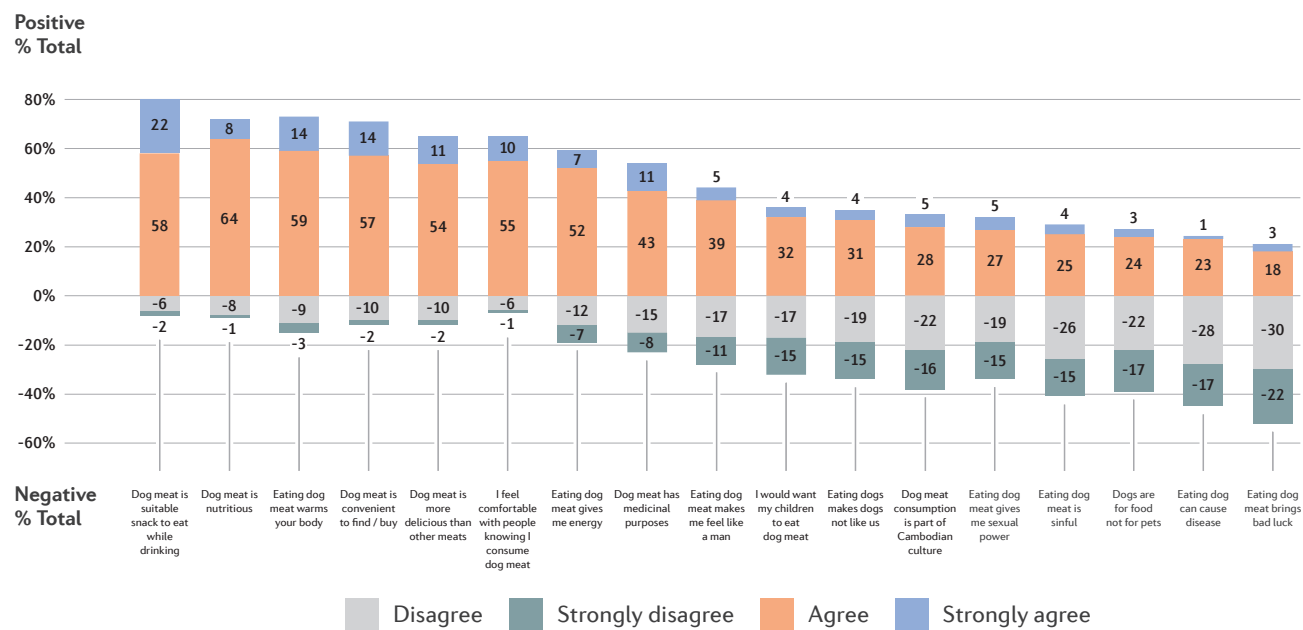


Figure 11: Evaluation of statements regarding dog meat

There was universal agreement on this- though it was suggested that the warming effect is not a key reason for eating dog meat but rather a pleasing additional effect.

##### b. Dog meat is nutritious

71% of the FGD respondents agreed that dog meat is nutritious, because it contains protein. A few respondents, on the other hand, rejected the notion that dog meat is nutritious, on the basis that they had never been taught so at school.

##### c. Dog meat gives me energy

71% believed that the meat provides energy, some male respondents citing that dog meat can boost sexual energy. Women however were less convinced of its energy-boosting powers.

##### d. Dog meat has medicinal purposes

The concept of possible medicinal benefits of dog meat received a mixed response. Most consider medicinal benefits to be limited to warming the body or increasing energy. Few believe that the meat has healing powers.

##### e. Dog meat makes me feel like a man / strong

There was a clear gender divide on this. Women largely disagreed with the statement and could not relate to it, whereas men more readily agreed.

##### f. Dog meat is part of Cambodian culture

None of the respondents felt that eating dog meat is part of Cambodian culture - they believed dog meat was not eaten by previous generations and pointed to it being a Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese import.

## 13. Concerns about eating dog meat

Both the U&A study and the focus groups revealed that dog-meat eaters have few concerns about their practice. It has become normalised, viewed as a special meat option for social gatherings and consumed by many types of people across society. Respondents felt they had been eating it for a long time and had never experienced any ill consequence because of it.

That said, there were a few minor concerns mentioned, which are worth noting as potential routes for changing perceptions perception around eating dog meat:

##### a. Dog meat overheats the body

Some respondents were anxious that if they over-eat dog meat their bodies warm up too much, causing

discomfort or illness. The general consensus was that one should not eat more than two dishes over a single drinking session for fear of overheating.

##### b. Dog meat consumption is a sin

For some Cambodians, eating dog meat is considered sinful and consuming it may bring bad luck-respondents recounted personal stories of misfortune to back this up. However many others don't believe this at all.

##### c. Women eating dog meat

Pressure not to eat dog meat is experienced by female respondents, as the stereotype that only men should eat dog meat persists.

## 14. Barriers to consumption

When probed as to whether they had ever considered stopping eating dog meat, most had not. They do not consider their consumption an issue. They don't feel they have it often, it is not illegal and it has no negative effects on their health or the health of others.

On the other hand, apart from the most hardcore consumers, there definitely seems to be scope to reduce or end consumption. For most, the drive to consume dog meat is not powerful, so if it becomes difficult to access or if their experience in consuming it is tainted in any way, they conceded that their urge to eat it would disappear.

During the group discussions, eight different concepts were tested to evaluate the respondents' likelihood of quitting eating dog meat. The responses were as follows:

##### a. Scientists have found new diseases embedded in dog meat

This was the concept which had most impact: respondents had an inkling it could be credible due to recent news reports in Cambodia of an outbreak of rabies. However, most respondents believed disease could not be caught through eating food, especially if it is cooked well, and they have never heard of anyone ever becoming sick through eating dog meat before. Notwithstanding, the fear of getting a serious illness

would be an effective deterrent if it was proven to be life-threatening, but the disease would have to be proven and relayed by a reliable source, ideally the Ministry of Health (MOH).

##### b. Eating dog meat is against the law of Cambodia

The second most influential concept would be if eating dog meat was made illegal. Many respondents would have second thoughts about consuming if this happened, although all groups acknowledged that the framework of law in Cambodia is often less than optimal, and a ban would not work unless punishment was severe.

##### c. Dogs are loyal and trustworthy pets and should not be eaten

Regardless of their frequent consumption, many respondents showed sympathy and compassion towards dogs; almost all of them own or had owned a pet dog - but they see no contention in eating dog as long as it was prepared for food legally. Cambodians do not feel such an emotional tie to their dog as Westerners do, and will often trade an old dog for a new one. Interestingly 82% of focus group respondents commented that they would prefer to eat dog meat which had been sourced from pets. They believed these animals would have been looked after better and thus would be free from disease and or chemicals.



**d. Your family and friends have stopped eating dog meat**

Amongst less frequent consumers there was an awareness that there is a stigma attached by some to eating dog, so if their friends and family stopped eating dog meat, they would presume that those people would look down upon them for continuing to do so.

**e. Society considers eating dog meat a sin**

Eating dog is not generally regarded as sinful; it is only the act of killing the dog that is sinful. As long as they are not part of this process their conscience is clear. Only a few noted that by participating in eating the meat they are driving demand for more to be killed.

**f. It has been proven that dog meat has no healing qualities**

Regular consumers were relatively unaffected by this concept. Even for those that believed in some greater

healing power, this was secondary to the primary factors for consumption.

**g. International people look down upon those who consume dog meat**

The opinions of foreigners are of very little consequence to the consumers.

**h. Your religion bans you from eating dog meat**

This concept had little bearing on the consumers. They feel were religion to ban it now such a rule would not be genuine as this would not be based in tradition.

**i. Celebrity endorsement to stop eating meat**

Cambodians like to follow celebrities who have a track record of upholding moral standards. But with regards to meat consumption, consumers do not see any moral issue with eating it so they are unlikely to be persuaded to change their behaviour based on a celebrity's stance.

## 15. Is dog meat becoming more popular?

62% of respondents believe that dog meat is becoming more popular and acceptable as mainstream; only 10% feel that it is becoming less. Dog meat sellers themselves specified that there has been an increase in the number of stores selling dog meat in recent years and that it is definitely more visible now than in the past.

Fluctuating sales can be the result of several factors besides pure popularity: 1) increased or decreased

competition from the opening up or closing down of other stores; 2) changing seasons with decidedly lower sales recorded in the hot and dry season; 3) the numbers of male blue-collar workers in a location; 4) social media and news announcements, for example, recent outbreaks of rabies occurring in the week previous to data collection.

## 16. Attitudes to animals in general

This discussion took place at the end of each session to avoid introducing bias. Participants were questioned regarding their views on animal characters in fiction - the groups viewed these animals as smart, often outwitting their human counterparts.

In the real world, there are certain animals the respondents believe should not be eaten, such as turtles, tortoises, monkeys, snakes, elephants, horses and crocodiles. When probed as to whether they believe that pain is felt equally by all animals, respondents disagreed.

It was apparent that while there is no tendency at all towards vegetarianism (regarding it as unhealthy because lacking strength-giving protein), the consumers do not enjoy the process of killing animals for meat. Some who had killed an animal before were shaken by the experience. They all wish the animals to be killed as humanely as possible and are quite aware that the process in which dogs are killed in Cambodia can be quite torturous. But whilst they are aware of this, it does not make them reconsider eating the meat.

## 17. Dog meat sellers

**a. Profile**

Sellers varied from the oldest at 55 having owned a dog-meat store for the last 20 years, to the youngest, who at 26 had opened a store within the past year. Most were in their late 30s to mid-40s and had owned businesses for around a decade, but five of the 15 stores had opened within the past 12 months. Interestingly, half of the stores interviewed in Phnom Penh and 2/5 in Siem Reap were female-owned and run.

**b. Journey to selling dog meat**

There are a number of reasons why the sellers began in this business, each unique to the individual. Most often it was due to the sellers' perception that dog meat is growing in popularity and deciding to capitalise on this. Three of the sellers were encouraged by friends or family to set up their business.

**c. Selling process**

Sellers' meat is supplied by dog meat traders, from dogs collected from all over the country. The sellers buy the dogs daily so that the meat is fresh, and store the meat in an ice box until it is sold. None of the sellers slaughter the animals themselves - although a number of them used to do so - killing the dogs yourself is more cost-effective, but they had all found the emotional distress to not be worth the monetary savings. Many of the sellers also believe it to be a sin to kill an animal - although somewhat perversely, those they do not believe that hiring someone else to do it is sinful.

After drop-off by the supplier, the seller has to clean and prepare the dog meat to make it ready for consumption. Some sellers purchase the meat already butchered into specific cuts whereas others take pride in executing this themselves.

**d. Seller perception of dog meat**

A total of 13 out of the 15 sellers interviewed consume dog meat themselves; they see no harm in eating it. One older seller noted that he had been recommended to eat dog meat by his doctor; others eat it through personal preference. There were two women sellers who do not eat dog meat, on the grounds that they find it disgusting.

The issue of rabies in dogs was raised but this largely brushed aside by the sellers. As long as it is cooked properly the sellers felt that there is not an issue.

Many of the dog-meat sellers have dogs as pets and proclaim to be pet lovers despite their profession. They would never consider killing their own pet for flesh.

**e. Alternative business considerations**

Many of the store owners commented on how hard they have to work, cooking from early in the morning till late at night. In most cases the shop is a family business without external staff. None of the sellers wish to pass the business on to their children, instead wanting their offspring to choose their own career, preferably in respectable office jobs.

A number of the businesses interviewed would like to sell something different. They are not happy with their profits, do not feel that their shop has any prospects for expansion, find the job tiring and in some cases, feel pity for the dogs. For those who would like to change their career, the problem is that they lack skills, education, money or inspiration to do so.

**f. Profits and sales**

The stores each sell between 1-4 dogs per day depending on the business size and season. Most of the shops on a regular basis sell approximately two dog per day, which is approximately 20-25 kg of meat. Daily revenue currently ranges from 200,000 KHR - 600,000 KHR (\$50-\$150; €45-135). The small-scale shops make around 40,000 KHR (\$10; €9) profit on a daily basis, though the profit can be as much as 200,000 KHR (\$50; €45) on a peak day.



Figure 12: How dogs are transported to slaughter houses



## 18. Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that efforts to change the behaviours of heavy dog-meat consumers will need to be well thought-out and creative. Consumers primarily eat out of habit, enjoyment of the taste and social conditioning, so there is not one particular method with which to combat their eating preferences. Changing the law or proving that the meat is unhealthy could be opportunities but have their challenges. A campaign to end the consumption of dog meat, as a result, would require a multifaceted approach working with different groups of stakeholders and consumers.

Efforts might be focused on promoting methods to stop potential consumers from trying the meat in the first place, or persuading moderate consumers that their friends and family no longer want to consume. If the younger generation were to see dog-meat consumption as an old person's habit or something that is not 'cool', they may stop adopting the habit and others will have no one to join with. The key feature of dog meat is that it is a social food; one that generally (with the exception of only the most frequent consumers), must be eaten in a group with others. This makes a potential situation where if one can stop some from eating dog meat it may have a knock-on social effect in getting others to stop.





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## VIER PFOTEN International

Linke Wienzeile 236  
1150 Vienna, Austria  
phone: +43-1-545 50 20-0  
office@four-paws.org

-  [four-paws.org](http://four-paws.org)
-  [facebook.com/fourpaws.org](https://facebook.com/fourpaws.org)
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