

FOUR PAWS INTERNATIONAL IN VIETNAM

Trung Yen 1 Building,
1A Vu Pham Ham street, Trung Hoa ward, Cau Giay district, Hanoi

Hanoi, February 22, 2023

OPEN LETTER

**Re: Confiscation of four tonnes of cat meat and 480 live cats
in Dong Thap province in Vietnam**

- To:
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development Vietnam
 - Department of Animal Health Vietnam
 - Dong Thap People's Committee
 - Dong Thap Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
 - Dong Thap Department of Animal Health

FOUR PAWS, the global animal welfare organisation, is writing to express concerns about the cat meat trade case in Dong Thap province on Feb 16 2023, reported by many well-known newspapers in Vietnam (*printed articles are attached to this letter*). Below is a summary of publicly available information about the case and from discussions with local government officials.

The Working Group of the Dong Thap Environmental Police Department of the Provincial Public Security, the Department of Animal Husbandry, Animal Health and Fisheries (DAH) of the province, coordinating with the Lai Vung District Police inspected the Kim Ngan fruit business in Long Thanh hamlet, Hoa Long commune, Lai Vung district, Dong Thap province, owned by Mr. Nguyen Huy Quyen (born in 1984, in Hai Duong province). The Working Group confiscated four tonnes of cat meat and 480 live cats. At the time of inspection, as Mr. Nguyen Huy Quyen was not present, the working group issued a working report on the case with Mrs. Tran Thi Ngan (born in 1960, in Hai Duong province), Mr. Quyen's mother. During the inspection, the working group discovered that the owner of the establishment had collected and transported animals of unknown origin without certificates of veterinary hygiene. In addition, these animals were kept in cold storage without certificates of veterinary hygiene. Mrs. Ngan admitted that the cats were sourced from provinces from the west. The live cats will be transported to Ho Chi Minh City for resale, and confiscated meat is being destroyed. A cat's average weight is 2 kilograms, hence the four tonnes of cat meat found represents 2,000 individuals, which were planned to be used in making cat bone glue.

Interviewed by Vnexpress journalist, Mr. Vo Be Hien, Head of Dong Thap Province's Department of Livestock, Veterinary and Fisheries said that the slaughterhouse has not



met the requirements, so it is not allowed to slaughter 480 live cats. However, the establishment can transport it to another place when it meets all the documents (documentation requirements).

On Feb 20, 2023, FOUR PAWS contacted the Animal Quarantine and Slaughter Control Department, Dong Thap DAH, who confirmed the above information reported by local authorities in Tuoi Tre newspaper to be correct. The live cats will be returned to the owner of the fruit business after being vaccinated and monitored and will then be sent to a slaughterhouse in Ho Chi Minh City. We believe that returning 480 cats to the establishment's owner, who broke multiple laws, encourages and enables illegal activities of the dog and cat meat trade in Vietnam. Allowing offenders to pay a minimal fine and continue their activities despite laws being clearly broken shows the risk to public safety.

From FOUR PAWS' perspective, this is a truly alarming situation. Every year one million cats and five million dogs are killed in Vietnam for their meat. The majority of these animals are stolen pets or community animals or illegal trafficked from other countries. In this case, considering the numerous reports received about theft of cats in Vietnam, it is very likely that a large proportion of the cats were stolen pets. If this trade continues, social security will be threatened.

The dog and cat meat trade is not only a threat to animal welfare but also to human health with the direct threat of rabies and other diseases and a potential threat for further zoonotic emergence. The unsanitary conditions in holding areas and slaughterhouses and the conditions of the trade provide the perfect breeding ground for the emergence and transmission of zoonotic diseases and could potentially be the source of another new devastating pathogen.

While FOUR PAWS understands the challenges faced by the authorities in this case. Rescuing hundreds of cats is probably infeasible to not only local authorities but also any rescue centres regarding facilities and capacity. We also note that cases like this will continue to happen unless Vietnam bans the dog and cat meat trade, Not only does the trade undermine government efforts to eradicate rabies by 2030, it also affects social cohesion and security. In a 2021 survey undertaken by FOUR PAWS, an overwhelming majority of Vietnamese people would support an end to the dog and cat meat trade, with 88% confirming they would support a ban.

With all the above reasons, FOUR PAWS has some recommendations as follows:

1. *FOUR PAWS formally request that the Dong Thap province and national authorities follow the example from Hoi An to phase out the dog and cat meat trade, which is the most practical solution, in order to address the risks to public health, animal welfare and Vietnam's reputation.*
2. *We are ready to work with Vietnam authorities at national and provincial level in*

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order to end the dog and cat meat trade in Vietnam and towards a ban on dog and cat meat trade issued by the Government of Vietnam.

FOUR PAWS is looking forward to your response regarding this urgent matter and would welcome a meeting in person to discuss it further.

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Gerald Dick

Attachment: printed articles of this case on 3 newspapers



