



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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# **MEAT FARM DOGS ARE CHRONICALLY STRESSED**

## **New research uses hair cortisol concentrations as a marker of stress and welfare status of farmed and pet dogs in South Korea**

In South Korea, it is estimated that over two and a half million dogs are eaten annually. The farming of dogs for meat production is controversial due to cultural differences and the role of dogs as companion animals in many cultures. Where dog farming exists, it is often unregulated, with animals maintained in intensive, unsanitary conditions with poor veterinary care throughout and at the end of their life.

Scientists at the University of Glasgow have recently completed a study, part-funded by UFAW, which is the first to report hair cortisol concentrations as a marker of stress, and therefore of welfare status, of farmed and pet dogs in South Korea. Dogs, like many other animals, produce more cortisol as part of a stress response to a demand or threat and the aim of the study was to assess if dogs surrendered from meat farms exhibited higher concentrations of cortisol in hair relative to pet dogs in the same area.

The results, which were recently published in the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) journal *Animal Welfare*, showed that dogs from meat farms had higher concentrations of cortisol than pet dogs, suggesting higher levels of chronic stress. The study used 84 pet dogs whose owners lived in Seoul and 86 dogs from ten different dog meat farms close to the city. The farmed dogs had been voluntarily surrendered to two charities, Save Korean Dogs and Humane Society International (HSI).

One of the report's authors, Professor Neil Evans from the Institute of Biodiversity, University of Glasgow said: *"In South Korea, the demand for dog meat is serviced by over 750,000 dog meat farms. However, as dogs are not legally classified as livestock, dog farming is largely unregulated and the welfare of the dogs unprotected. While the concentration of cortisol is only one measure of stress, our research provides the first quantitative evidence that dogs in meat farms are kept in conditions associated with poor welfare and identifies the need for better welfare law to protect farmed dogs."*

### **SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE**



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*Our findings could also inform those who consume dog meat of the potential long-term physiological suffering of these dogs, and could bring about a re-evaluation of the cultural beliefs regarding the consumption of dog meat.”*

While there has been international condemnation of the consumption of dog meat in countries such as South Korea, it remains popular as a result of tradition and its supposed effects on well-being.

-ENDS-

### **Note to editors:**

The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) is an internationally recognised, independent scientific and educational animal welfare charity. It works to improve knowledge and understanding of animals' needs in order to achieve high standards of welfare for farm, companion, research, captive wild animals and those with which we interact in the wild.

UFAW improves animal welfare worldwide through its programme of awards, grants and scholarships; by educational initiatives, especially at university and college level; by providing information in books, videos, reports and in its scientific journal *Animal Welfare*; by providing expert advice to governments and others, including for legislation and 'best practice' guidelines and codes; and by working with animal keepers, scientists, vets, lawyers and all those who care about animals.

This work relies on the support of members, subscribers and donors.

### **Further information**

The abstract of the study can be read at UFAW's website <http://www.ufaw.org.uk/the-ufaw-journal/animal-welfare>.

If you wish to read the full paper, you can visit [ingentaconnect.com](http://ingentaconnect.com) to access the paper for \$25 (US) plus taxes.

<https://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/ufaw/aw/2019/00000028/00000004/art00001>

**Paper reference:** Maxwell, N, Buchanan, C, and Evans, N (2019). Hair cortisol concentrations, as a measure of chronic activity within the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, is elevated in dogs farmed for meat, relative to pet dogs, in South Korea. *Animal Welfare*. 28(4), 389–395.

Those purchasing the paper or choosing to subscribe to the *Animal Welfare* journal will be supporting UFAW's work. <http://www.ufaw.org.uk/the-ufaw-journal/subscription-rates>

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