



10th September 2014

Mr. Qin Guangrong,
Party Secretary of Yunnan Provincial Communist
Party Committee,
Kunming, Yunnan Province

Dear Mr. Qin Guangrong,

I am writing on behalf of the Asia for Animals Coalition, representing international organisations with a shared focus on improving the welfare of animals across Asia, and with extensive experience and expertise in the successful delivery of humane dog population management and rabies elimination programmes throughout the region. We express our deep concern with regards to reports of the culling of dogs in response to human rabies fatalities in Baoshan City, Yunnan Province.

According to a report in the China Daily¹, as of the 6th September 2014, over 4,900 dogs have been killed in the City, following the death of five people, suspected to have been infected with rabies, with culling continuing.

The indiscriminate culling of dogs has been proven to be an ineffective method to control rabies in dog populations, and is in breach of recommendations by leading human and animal health experts and authorities, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

All leading organisations committed to eliminating rabies recognise- through expertise and proven experience- that the most effective way to decrease the number of human cases of rabies is by tackling the disease within the dog population through mass vaccination.

The WHO recognises that "*there is no evidence that removal of dogs alone has ever had a significant impact on dog population densities or the spread of rabies*"; and the OIE states that

¹ http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-09/07/content_18560685.htm

"animal vaccination remains the method of choice to control and eradicate rabies". To be most effective, such programs should be paralleled by human public health preventive measures and humane dog population management (dog sterilisation)².

It is widely accepted that canine rabies vaccination coverage of 70% reduces transmission enough to control outbreaks of the disease in the dog population³, which leads to the prevention of virus transmission from dogs to humans⁴. It has been seen that where > 80% of dogs are properly vaccinated against rabies, the occurrence of human rabies cases ceases promptly⁵.

However, despite extensive and widely-accepted evidence and expertise on humane and effective solutions to control and eliminate rabies, China has not yet conducted a canine rabies vaccination programme on the required scale. According to a figure quoted at the National Rabies Control and Prevention Strategy Symposium in 2007, just 10% of dogs in China are vaccinated against rabies. The implementation of province-wide and nation-wide mass vaccination programmes would effectively eliminate the disease from the canine population, thereby ending human fatalities and the resultant brutal and inhumane dog culls, which lead to both national and international condemnation. In 2009, the brutal mass dog cull in Hanzhong, Shanxi Province, was strongly criticized for its indiscriminate and brutal nature, and the recent dog cull in Baoshan- the biggest government orchestrated indiscriminate dog cull since then- is an unacceptable, outdated and ineffective approach to controlling the disease.

Furthermore, the costs of rabies elimination programs that are focused mainly on mass vaccination of dogs are justified by the future financial savings of human rabies prevention programs⁶, as the unit price per dog vaccination is lower than human Post-Exposure prophylactic treatment. According to the OIE, "*with only 10% of the financial resources used worldwide to treat people after a dog bite, veterinary services would be able to eradicate rabies in animals and thus stop almost all human cases*".

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Chinese cities, such as Beijing, Dalian, Nanjing and Hefei, have ended the implementation of indiscriminate culling, opting for humane and effective methods of dog population and rabies control. The dog cull in Baoshan is counter-effective and is in opposition to the progress being made in other cities throughout China in the field of urban animal management.

As international animal protection groups that have always welcomed and supported China's progress, we urge the Chinese authorities to end the dog culls immediately. Our supporters from around the world- including China- are expressing grave concerns about the unnecessary suffering caused to dogs and their distraught owners in Baoshan.

The Asia for Animals Coalition is committed to supporting humane and effective solutions, and, to this end, we would like to offer expertise and resources to help cities to address dog overpopulation and disease control. We would also be prepared to set up a task force with the aim

² World Health Organization (WHO) (2001). Strategies for the control and elimination of rabies in Asia. Report of a WHO Interregional Consultation. Retrieved from

http://www.who.int/rabies/en/Strategies_for_the_control_and_elimination_of_rabies_in_Asia.pdf

³ World Health Organization (2005). WHO expert consultation on Rabies. In *WHO Technical Report Series*; 931 Geneva, Switzerland.

⁴ Davlin, S. L. & VonVille, H. M. (2012). Canine rabies vaccination and domestic dog population characteristics in the developing world: A systematic review. *Vaccine.*, 21, 3492-502.

⁵ World Health Organization. Rabies in the South East Asia Region. Retrieved from http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/CDS_rabies.pdf.pdf

⁶ World Health Organization. Rabies in the South East Asia Region. Retrieved from http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/CDS_rabies.pdf.pdf

of sharing information on internationally accepted methods of humane dog population management, dog registration, and mass vaccination.

Over the past 36 years China has made huge progress in animal welfare. We believe that engaging in dialogue with international experts on animal management and scientific rabies prevention and control will represent another big step forward for China. We hope to be able to make a positive contribution to this part of China's development.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Li, Ph.D.
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Sent on behalf of the following organizations

- Animal Guardians
- Animal People
- Animals Asia Foundation
- ACRES
- Blue Cross of India
- Change for Animals Foundation
- Earth Island Institute
- Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations
- Humane Society International
- International Animal Rescue
- International Fund for Animal Welfare
- Philippine Animal Welfare Society
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (UK)
- Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Hong Kong

Copied to:

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