

Australian Tourists Duped Into Eating Dog Meat In Bali

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An Animals Australia investigation has revealed Australian tourists unwittingly eating dog meat in Bali. Dogs are being captured and killed not far from popular beaches for a secretive trade that is not only terribly cruel but poses a major public health risk.

“This is a profoundly distressing situation. Not only is the suffering of the dogs horrifying, tourists are unwittingly fuelling the trade. Most tourists have no idea that the letters RW on the outside of popular street food stalls in Bali indicates that dog meat is being served,” said Animals Australia’s Director of Investigations, Lyn White.

“In addition, mobile dog meat vendors are deliberately targeting tourists on beaches and are prepared to lie about the origin of the meat to get a sale,” she added.

Bali’s unique heritage dogs and pets are being captured for this growing trade. Dogs are being brutally caught by dog meat gangs with wire nooses on poles, bound and bagged before being transported on motorbikes to crude slaughter areas. Vendors were filmed bludgeoning dogs, hanging them by the throat so that they slowly died of asphyxiation, and forcing poison down dogs’ and puppies’ throats. The butchering of dogs was completed on the floor in filthy conditions.

“Our investigator’s footage of dogs being captured and slaughtered is deeply upsetting. The suffering of these dogs is nothing short of heart-breaking,” Ms White said.

Dog eating was brought to Bali by minority Christian ethnic groups who came to the island to work in the hospitality industry. The belief that it increases male virility, and its low cost, has seen its popularity grow with locals who are unaware of the cruelty or associated health risks.

“Bali’s unique dogs once lived peacefully with local communities. It was incredibly sad to see the bewildered faces of children as their village dogs were brutally caught by dog meat gangs.”

Animals Australia advised the Bali government of the outcomes of the investigation in early April and wrote to all Consuls in Bali alerting them of the risks to tourists.

“The dog meat trade in Bali is breaching local food safety and animal cruelty laws. We have been meeting with government officials and have highlighted the need to urgently act considering the human health risks and dire animal welfare consequences of the trade,” Ms White said.

“Not only is poisoned meat entering the dog meat trade, a sample of raw dog meat tested showed the meat was contaminated with high levels of coliform bacteria and E.Coli, which are commonly associated with faecal contamination and can cause serious food poisoning.”

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Animals Australia's investigations in Bali also encompassed the killing of cattle, pigs and chickens in slaughterhouses and revealed acute levels of suffering and non-existent food safety protocols. Meat from these abattoirs is sold to locals and through the street food vendors to tourists.

"Producing food for 1.2 million Australian tourists annually has increased the animal welfare problems in Bali significantly. We have the opportunity to rectify this unfortunate situation by using our unique friendship with the Balinese to encourage positive change."

"We have based Animal's Australia's Veterinary Director in Bali as part of our offer to partner with the Bali government to create animal welfare improvements on the island," Ms White said.

"This is not about condemning a culture, it is about addressing unnecessary cruelty and seeking to transform a situation of unimaginable suffering into a positive outcome," she added.

"Dog eating in Bali was fuelled by a minority group who came to the island to work in the hospitality industry – it is not a Balinese practice. For thousands of years Bali's dogs have lived peacefully in villages with locals – it is our hope that they will be able to do so again."

Bali Dog Meat Trade

1. There are estimated to be 400,000 - 500,000 dogs in Bali (FAO, 2016).
2. Bali's heritage dogs are unique and have longstanding cultural and religious significance in Bali. They are one of the few remaining indigenous dog populations in the world that have a pure lineage back thousands of years to the first dogs that evolved from the grey wolf. They are not seen as pets but as working dogs. Traditionally, every compound would have dogs loyal to it who were valued as protectors from strangers, rodents, snakes – and protecting their livestock and rice fields.
3. In 1970, the first dog meat restaurant appeared in Bali. It was owned by Flores Islanders. Flores Islanders currently consume more dog than chicken.
4. The dog meat trade in Bali has become one of the major threats for Bali dogs. It is estimated that 70,000 dogs in Bali are slaughtered annually, and their meat served at approximately 75 restaurants.
5. Between February and May 2017, an Animals Australia investigator infiltrated the dog meat trade in Bali and documented the catching and killing of dogs for the first time. Various killing methods were documented – including hanging (strangulation) from trees, bludgeoning then bleeding out, poisoning and shooting.
6. The butchering of dogs was also documented, showing meat being prepared in filthy environments. Dog meat was purchased from a restaurant and taken to a government testing laboratory in Denpasar. The result showed the meat was contaminated with high levels of coliform bacteria and E.Coli, which are commonly associated with faecal contamination and can cause serious food poisoning.
7. Animals Australia highlighted investigation outcomes to the Bali government in early April, emphasising the breaches of food safety and animal protection laws. In addition, the emotional distress that would be felt by tourists on unwittingly eating dog meat was highlighted, as was the significant physical health risks for both tourists and locals. Meetings with the Agriculture and Health Departments have indicated positive intent to act on the dog meat trade (recognising its illegal nature) but as yet no public commitment has been made by the Bali government.
8. Animals Australia also wrote to every nation's Consul in Bali in early April highlighting that tourists were unknowingly being offered and eating dog meat, and raising the associated health risks.
9. A majority of Balinese people (Hindus) don't like the dog meat trade. The current trend, however, is that more people are eating dog.
10. The majority of dog meat consumers in Indonesia are the Sulawesi people who came to Bali to work in the tourism hospitality trade. They are of Christian faith. There are dog meat restaurants surrounding the two major churches. The biggest Christian church in Bali is in Kuta. There are many cross-cultural marriages between Manadonese and Balinese people – hence the spike in their presence in Bali.

Bali Dog Meat Trade ... (continued)

11. Balinese people are starting to eat dog meat more now – an increasing trend.
The “selling points” of dog meat are that:
 - Drinking alcohol (arak or beer) with dog meat is said to improve the taste of the meat;
 - It is purported to increase men’s virility and gives them courage;
 - It is purported to increase the sexual stamina of men;
 - It is said to be a ‘warming’ meat; and
 - It is cheaper than other meat.
12. In looking at the “economic” value of the dog meat trade it’s very important to factor in that dog meat consumption goes hand-in-hand with alcohol consumption. So it increases profit margins of vendors because they sell more alcohol if they offer dog meat.
13. Local groups that have studied the trade advise that:
 - 45% of dogs destined for dog meat are sold to traders; 5% are given by owners in exchange for rice, chillies, baskets and so on.
 - 50% of RW dogs are stolen from the streets and from houses.
 - 50% of RWs in Bali are supplied with dogs from other regencies. Moving dogs across Bali regency borders is illegal due to rabies risks.
 - There is also a thriving “catering” business involving dog meat. They cater to private functions and are prepared in private homes out of sight.
14. The break-up of dog meat restaurant locations is approximately:
 - 20 out of 75 in rural areas (not tourist areas); and
 - 55 out of 75 in urban areas (moderate number of tourists).
15. It is not illegal to eat dog meat. It is illegal to capture, hold and kill animals in ways that are proscribed by animal welfare laws. It is illegal to operate an unlicensed restaurant and produce food contrary to food safety laws. Many small premises that sell dog meat are unlicensed and all would be breaching food safety laws; Bali’s government has confirmed this in meetings with Animals Australia.
16. Rabies issues: Bali has committed to being rabies free by 2020, but the dog meat trade is undermining the ability to control rabies due to the illegal movement of dogs (for meat orders) between provinces. (15 people died from rabies in Bali in 2015 last known statistic)
17. Anyone butchering a rabid dog would also be at high risk as rabies is transmitted through saliva and brain matter.
18. Animals Australia’s investigation revealed the cruel slaughter of pigs, chickens and cattle in Bali – with routine killing and butchering methods also breaching local animal protection and food safety laws.
19. Animals Australia’s intention is to maintain a presence in Bali with a view to securing the enforcement of laws to improve the treatment of all animals on the Island.