

# HUMAN SECURITY IN ANIMAL WELFARE: AN ANALYSIS OF HEALTH SECURITY CONCERNS IN THE DOG MEAT TRADE IN INDONESIA

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## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana isu keamanan kesehatan dimanfaatkan untuk menyelamatkan anjing dari perdagangan daging anjing di Indonesia. Meskipun mendapat sorotan yang semakin besar, konsumsi daging anjing masih berlangsung di beberapa kota di Indonesia. Upaya untuk menghentikan praktik ini tetap menghadapi tantangan akibat tradisi budaya yang mengakar, kesalahpahaman yang masih luas terkait manfaat kesehatan dari konsumsi daging anjing, serta ketergantungan ekonomi banyak individu pada perdagangan ini sebagai mata pencaharian. Namun demikian, semakin banyak pemerintah daerah yang mulai memberlakukan larangan terhadap perdagangan daging anjing guna menekan konsumsi daging anjing. Setidaknya 80 kota, kabupaten, dan provinsi di Indonesia telah mengeluarkan larangan tersebut. Perkembangan ini memunculkan pertanyaan penelitian: "Mengapa semakin banyak pemerintah daerah memilih untuk melarang perdagangan daging anjing?" Untuk menjawab pertanyaan ini, penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan menggabungkan wawancara dan studi pustaka sebagai teknik pengumpulan data, serta menggunakan teori keamanan manusia sebagai kerangka analisis. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa peningkatan jumlah larangan di tingkat daerah terutama didorong oleh isu keamanan kesehatan yang diangkat oleh koalisi Dog Meat Free Indonesia (DMFI). Melalui kampanye daring dan luring, aksi unjuk rasa publik, serta kegiatan lobi, DMFI menyoroti risiko kesehatan, khususnya ancaman rabies, di balik perdagangan daging anjing. Upaya advokasi ini telah meningkatkan kesadaran publik dan menekan pemerintah daerah untuk melarang perdagangan daging anjing yang bertujuan melindungi masyarakat dari ancaman keamanan kesehatan akibat konsumsi daging anjing.

**Kata Kunci:** larangan, pemerintah\_daerah, ketidakamanan, rabies, konsumsi

## Abstract

This study seeks to examine how health security concerns are leveraged to save dogs from the dog meat trade in Indonesia. Despite increasing scrutiny, the consumption of dog meat persists in certain cities in Indonesia. Efforts to stop this practice remain challenging due to entrenched cultural traditions, widespread misconceptions about the health benefits of consuming dog meat, and economic dependence of many individuals on this trade for their livelihood. Nevertheless, a growing number of regional governments have started imposing bans on the dog meat trade to curb dog meat consumption. At least 80 cities, regencies, and provinces across Indonesia have introduced such bans. This progress leads to this research question: "Why have more regional governments chosen to ban the dog meat trade?" To address this question, this study employs a qualitative method, combining interviews and literature reviews for data collection, with human security theory in place. This study finds that the surge in regional bans is largely driven by health security concerns raised by the Dog Meat Free Indonesia (DMFI) coalition. Through both online and offline campaigns, public rallies, and lobbying activities, DMFI emphasized the health risks, particularly the threat of rabies, associated with the dog meat trade. These advocacy efforts have heightened awareness and placed pressure on local authorities to enact regulatory bans aimed at protecting communities from the health security threats linked to dog meat consumption.

**Keywords:** ban, regional\_government, insecurity, rabies, consumption

Welfare (UDAW) serves as an international regime aimed at advancing animal welfare. This regime calls on states to recognize animals as sentient beings and to promote their well-being. Sentient beings mean that animals are capable of experiencing pain and suffering. Accordingly, governments should bear the responsibility to prevent cruelty and safeguard animal welfare. UDAW has four core principles: recognition of sentience, duty of care, guidance for legislation, and integration with development and health. The principle of duty of care, for instance, establishes the norm that states have both a moral and practical responsibility to prevent cruelty, reduce suffering, and ensure animal welfare. With these norms and principles in place, UDAW seeks to realize the Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare: freedom from hunger, thirst, and malnutrition; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury, and disease; freedom from fear and distress; and freedom to express normal patterns of behavior (Gibson, 2011, p. 541).

The practice of trading and consuming dog meat contravenes the principles and norms set out in UDAW. Since dogs are recognized as sentient beings, their treatment within this trade directly undermines the principle of sentience recognition embedded in this international regime. In addition, the industry is marked by significant cruelty because dogs are frequently seized and transported under harsh, inhumane conditions and subsequently slaughtered without adequate stunning.

In Asia, dog meat consumption has been banned in Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Philippines (Czajkowski, 2014, p. 30). However, it remains prevalent in certain countries, such as China, Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Indonesia follows a similar pattern, where dog meat consumption persists though at a relatively low rate, with less than seven percent of the total population participating. Every year, millions of dogs are captured and transported throughout Indonesian cities to meet demand. Many of these dogs are either stolen pets or stray animals from urban and rural areas. In Surakarta, Central Java, for example, between 85 and 90 dogs were slaughtered daily in 2019 to supply local eateries (Anugrahanto,

2022). In Tomohon, North Sulawesi, dog slaughtering often occurs publicly, including at the notorious Tomohon extreme meat market. This widespread animal cruelty has sparked outrage among animal rights activists across the world. They urge the Indonesian government to ban the dog meat trade and consumption, following the example set by Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and the Philippines, which have outlawed this practice.

Yet, enacting a national ban on the distribution and consumption of dog meat in Indonesia remains a significant challenge. This is primarily due to three interrelated factors: deeply rooted traditional customs, widespread misconceptions about the health benefits of eating dog meat, and the economic dependence of many communities on this trade for their livelihoods (Ayu et al., 2022, p. 26; Sambora et al., 2025, p. 70). However, regional governments are increasingly recognizing the severity of the issue, leading to a growing number of local bans. As of December 2024, at least 80 cities and regencies across Indonesia have implemented prohibitions on the dog meat trade. Among them is Karanganyar in Central Java, which banned the trade to combat animal cruelty and raise public awareness about rabies and other health risks linked to dog meat consumption. Therefore, this study seeks to answer: “Why have more regional governments decided to ban the dog meat trade?” The focus on examining the drivers behind the increasing number of regional bans represents the novelty of this research. In doing so, this study contributes to the existing literature, which has largely concentrated on explaining the persistence and severity of the dog meat trade in Indonesia.

This study finds that that regional governments are increasingly enacting bans due to health security issues raised by the Dog Meat Free Indonesia (DMFI) coalition. DMFI has highlighted the risks of rabies transmission through the dog meat trade, aiming to increase public awareness and pressure local governments into enacting regulatory prohibitions to protect public health. As a non-state actor, DMFI plays a pivotal role in highlighting human security issues associated with the brutal dog meat trade in Indonesia, exposing rabies as a serious threat to public health security, with an ultimately goal of

advocating for the complete abolition of the trade in the country.

This study highlights a growing awareness at the city level regarding the risks of rabies tied to the dog meat trade, leading to local regulations banning it. This heightened awareness is largely driven by the human security discourse championed by DMFI. By framing dog meat consumption as a threat to human security, the coalition has successfully mobilized local governments to take action. Through strategic framing, DMFI has urged authorities to implement policies that halt both consumption and trade, ultimately raising awareness about animal cruelty and health risks. This framing method then contributed to the adoption of regional regulations banning the practice.

To further unpack this finding, the discussion is structured into four parts. First, it explores the theoretical framework of human security. Second, it applies this theory to examine how the dog meat trade is perceived as a health security issue. Third, it explains how DMFI has leveraged human security concerns to advocate for regional regulations banning the trade. Finally, it details how regional governments have responded to these health security concerns by instituting bans on the dog meat trade through local regulations.

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method to examine how the Dog Meat Free Indonesia (DMFI) coalition has framed the dog meat trade as a human security issue in order to halt its consumption and distribution across Indonesia. This method enables a deep, nuanced understanding not only of DMFI's perspectives, values, and strategic narratives surrounding the trade but also of how the coalition has articulated human security concerns to safeguard dogs throughout the archipelago.

According to Monique Hennink et al., p. (2020, p. 57), qualitative research allows investigators to identify complex issues, interpret social phenomena, and understand the lived experiences and viewpoints of participants. Central to this approach is active listening to individual narratives and stories. Researchers must embody curiosity, empathy, and intellectual openness to grasp

how economic, social, cultural, and environmental contexts shape human behavior and lived realities (Hennink et al., 2020, p. 58).

Using this qualitative method, I conducted semi-structured interviews and an extensive literature review. I analyzed books, news reports, peer-reviewed journal articles, and official publications related to DMFI's advocacy initiatives. I interviewed key figures including Dog Meat Free Indonesia (DMFI) coordinator Merry Fernandez, Jakarta Animal Aid Network (JAAN) legal & advocacy manager Adrian Hane, Animal Friends Jogja (AFJ) program manager Elsa Lailatul Marfu'ah, DMFI legal team member Raga Bintang Muhammad, and animal welfare advocate Wiwiek Bagja. I also talked to lawmaker Francine Widjojo from Jakarta City Council and animal welfare coordinator Hastho Yuliyanto from Directorate of Veterinary Public Health at Ministry of Agriculture.

The interviews took place during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Animal Welfare Conference-Indonesia International Conference on Dec. 6 to Dec. 7, 2024 in Jakarta. This event offered a valuable opportunity to meet and engage with public officials as well as activists from DMFI member organizations like JAAN and AFJ. During the conference, I also participated in focus group discussions and conducted in-depth interviews to collect both primary qualitative and quantitative data.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study seeks to explain the growing trend of regional governments in Indonesia banning the dog meat trade. Findings indicate that these bans are driven primarily by health security concerns raised by the Dog Meat Free Indonesia (DMFI) coalition. DMFI successfully reframed the dog meat trade as a health security crisis by exposing the hidden threat of rabies transmission associated with unregulated slaughter and consumption.

By consistently highlighting the direct link between dog meat consumption and rabies outbreaks, DMFI transformed a largely cultural or ethical issue into a matter of human security. The coalition strategically mobilized public awareness campaigns, scientific evidence, and advocacy dialogues with officials to pressure local governments into enacting regulatory prohibitions. Their

framing emphasized that unchecked dog meat markets not only perpetuate animal cruelty but also endanger public health, especially in densely populated urban areas where rabies remains a preventable yet persistent threat. As a result, many regional authorities have enacted local regulations banning the trade, citing both animal welfare and public health security as justifications. This shift reflects a broader recognition that animal health and human health are intrinsically linked.

### **3.1. Understanding Health Security in Human Security Framework**

According to Mahbub ul Haq, human security centers on the protection of individuals and communities rather than states or nations. He argued that human security is fundamentally about safeguarding people's lives, livelihoods, and well-being. The essence of human security lies in how effectively individuals' lives are protected. This distinguishes it from state security, which prioritizes territorial integrity and national sovereignty. In contrast, human security addresses a broader spectrum of threats, including pandemics, poverty, and infectious diseases. Haq emphasized that achieving human security requires development-focused interventions rather than reliance on military strength (Bajpai, 2000, p. 11).

Similarly, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) underscores the centrality of human security within its framework (Ariningtyas, 2025; Ulung, 2024). In this context, security is understood as ensuring three fundamental freedoms: freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom from indignity. Freedom from indignity means individuals are able to make autonomous choices and have their basic rights respected. Freedom from fear ensures protection against both direct and indirect forms of violence—ranging from physical assault to systemic oppression. Freedom from want guarantees access to secure livelihoods, basic necessities, a decent standard of living, and overall well-being (Fuentes-Nieva et al., 2022, p. 35).

Human security aims to protect individuals from a wide range of threats, such as crime, hunger, disease, unemployment, social instability, political repression, and

environmental degradation (Setyowati et al., 2024). Consequently, it encompasses seven interrelated dimensions: food security, health security, political security, economic security, environmental security, personal security, and community security (Bajpai, 2000, p. 14; Ulung et al., 2025, p. 111).

Health security ensures individuals are protected from diseases and illnesses while also guaranteeing access to essential healthcare services. As such, threats to health security include the presence of infectious diseases and the lack of accessible healthcare infrastructure. Health security involves safeguarding populations from health threats that endanger life, well-being, and economic productivity. This encompasses preventing and managing outbreaks of infectious diseases, such as pandemics like COVID-19 and Ebola, ensuring availability of essential medical services and medications, protecting against environmental health risks such as air and water pollution and the impacts of climate change, addressing chronic and mental health conditions, and strengthening the resilience and preparedness of health systems in emergencies.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines health security as the global efforts required to reduce the risks and impacts of acute public health events that pose threats to populations across diverse geographical regions and international borders. Health security is deeply interconnected with other dimensions of human security, including economic security, food security, and environmental security. For example, in the context of environmental security, climate change can alter the geographic range and seasonality of vector-borne diseases such as malaria, thereby increasing public health security risks. In terms of food security, poor health can reduce agricultural productivity and compromise nutritional outcomes. Regarding economic security, illness often results in lost income, increased household poverty, and rising medical expenses, creating a cycle of vulnerability.

### **3.2. Perceiving Dog Meat Trade as a Global Health Security Issue**

In Asia, some countries, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Thailand, have



regarded dog meat consumption as a threat to health security because dogs can transmit zoonotic viral diseases, such as rabies. They perceive the practice as a risk not only to dogs but also to humans, since in much of Asia, rabies is primarily spread by dogs (Windiyaningsih et al., 2004). Consequently, these countries have prohibited dog meat consumption. For example, Hong Kong banned it in 1950 (Magramo, 2023), the Philippines followed in 1998 (Podberscek, 2009), Thailand in 2014 (Anadolu Agency, 2014), and Taiwan in 2017 (Phillips, 2017). The latest Asian country to join the group is South Korea, which in January 2024 passed a bill that bans the slaughter of dogs for food. This legislation also prohibits the consumption, distribution, and sale of any food products derived from dog ingredients (Shin, 2024).

At least five Asian countries have now outlawed the trade and consumption of dog meat, largely thanks to the persistent efforts of animal-rights activists. These groups have taken a leading role in opposing the practice, speaking out loudly to protect dogs from human consumption. In South Korea, for example, Humane Society International (HSI) has been rescuing dogs from farms and relocating them overseas for decades. Approximately 1,100 dog farms operate for food production in South Korea, raising about half a million dogs (Yeung et al., 2024).

In Asia, it is estimated that between 13 to 16 million dogs are consumed annually (Podberscek, 2009, p. 617). Dog meat trade and consumption have ticked the criteria for a global issue: it is both highly impactful and crosses international borders, demanding coordinated, long-term responses (Winarno, 2011, p. 20).

The trade cannot be viewed merely as a domestic matter because it has clear transnational dimensions. In Vietnam, for instance, much of the dog meat served in restaurants originates from Thailand. In Thailand, many dogs fall prey to smugglers who steal them, confine them in severely overcrowded cages, and transport them across the Mekong River to Laos and ultimately to Vietnam. The dogs consumed in Vietnamese households are often formerly well-cared-for pets stolen from Thailand (Campbell, 2013). The cruelty inherent in this trafficking has

ignited global outrage among animal-rights advocates. Advances in technology and communication now enable activists worldwide to collaborate, protest, and work toward halting the practice. Globalization has blurred national boundaries, fostering a shared sense of responsibility among activists to end the dog-meat trade and its profound health-security impacts.

Globalization has enabled animal rights activists across the world to collaborate in efforts to end the dog meat trade in Indonesia. This international network facilitated the formation in 2017 of a coalition called Dog Meat Free Indonesia (DMFI) by prominent animal welfare organizations such as Animal Friends Jogja, Jakarta Animal Aid Network, Change for Animals Foundation, Four Paws, and Humane Society International. Through this coalition, activists have consistently highlighted the significant health security risks associated with the dog meat trade in Indonesia, urging the Indonesian government to enact a nationwide ban. To amplify their advocacy, the coalition enlisted support from high-profile international public figures, including Oscar-winning actress Charlize Theron and British comedian Ricky Gervais, leveraging their platforms to raise global awareness and mobilize sustained pressure on Indonesian authorities to prioritize both animal welfare and human health.

The consumption of dog meat in Indonesia has galvanized animal rights activists worldwide to unite in efforts to end this practice. Dogs are frequently kidnapped, subjected to severe torture, and slaughtered in inhumane conditions before their meat is cooked and served in various restaurants. These establishments are predominantly located in specific cities and provinces, especially Jakarta and Central Java. Investigations by DMFI revealed that approximately 90% of dogs slaughtered for consumption in Central Java are sourced from urban areas in West Java, including Cianjur, Pangandaran, Sukabumi, Garut, and Tasikmalaya. The coalition also uncovered that roughly 13,700 dogs are trafficked into Central Java each month, creating a serious public health risk, particularly because West Java is not free of rabies, thereby increasing the potential for rabies transmission to humans (Animal Welfare Indonesia, 2023).

In Jakarta alone, approximately 340 dogs are slaughtered daily for human consumption. Two major dog suppliers operate in the East Jakarta districts of Cawang and Cibubur. The Cibubur supplier sources dogs primarily from West Java, while the Cawang supplier draws from West Java as well as from other regions, including Bali. The demand for dog meat comes from a variety of customers, including Korean restaurants, which receive between 8 to 15 kilograms of dog meat weekly from the Cawang supplier (Animal Welfare Indonesia, 2023).

In West Java, Sukabumi serves as a critical supply hub for dogs destined for regions with high demand for dog meat. Thousands of dogs are unlawfully captured and stolen each month from streets and rural areas across Sukabumi. These dogs are then transported alive—often in inhumane conditions—to major consumption centers, including Jakarta, East Java, and Central Java, particularly Surakarta. Transport methods include trucks covered with tarpaulins or motorbikes carrying dogs in burlap sacks, with their mouths tightly bound to prevent noise. DMFI's 2019 investigation estimated that approximately 13,700 dogs are stolen and captured monthly across Java. Many of these animals are taken to slaughterhouses in Surakarta, where they supply around 82 restaurants serving dog meat (Four Paws, 2020, p. 35).

Like Surakarta, North Sulawesi is notorious for its dog meat consumption and shocking animal suffering. Markets in Tomohon and Langowan are infamous for extreme cruelty. Each week, tens of thousands of animals—including dogs—are traded, violently slaughtered, and displayed in public. The slaughter is performed through brutal methods such as bludgeoning with sticks and torching alive, often carried out in plain sight of other animals awaiting death. This horrifying spectacle is frequently promoted as entertainment (Four Paws, 2020, p. 36).

DMFI investigations revealed that tens of thousands of dogs are illegally trafficked into North Sulawesi each month to supply over 200 traditional markets, including the infamous Tomohon market. A major source of this supply is Makassar, the

capital of South Sulawesi. Dogs are transported from Makassar over more than 17,000 kilometers, spanning over 40 hours of continuous travel across four provincial borders. During this journey, they are deprived of food, water, and rest. Despite widespread animal suffering, local authorities and tourism operators continue to promote these markets as a “must-see cultural attraction” (Four Paws, 2020, p. 36).

In Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, DMFI's investigation conducted between December 2020 and March 2021 estimated that 200 to 300 dogs are slaughtered monthly for human consumption. The city hosts more than 15 restaurants openly selling dog meat, and annually, DMFI reported that 2,000 to 3,000 dogs are sourced, slaughtered, and sold. The trade primarily relies on stolen pets and stray dogs, with most being brought in from neighboring districts and cities. Some restaurants are also reportedly involved in breeding and raising dogs specifically for slaughter (Four Paws, 2021, p. 3).

Dog thieves typically target healthy, well-built dogs to maximize profit, which makes pet theft a common and distressing occurrence. Captures often happen outside urban centers, within a 50 km radius of Balikpapan. The methods used are inhumane: dogs are frequently beaten over the head, poisoned with potassium cyanide or strychnine, or shot with arrows and other weapons, leading to severe injuries such as wounds and broken bones. After capture, dogs are shoved into sacks and transported on motorbikes at night or early morning, their mouths tightly bound to avoid detection (Four Paws, 2021, p. 3).

Balikpapan hosts two primary dog slaughterhouses and two main distributors who supply dog meat to local restaurants. These distributors provide either live dogs or pre-slaughtered meat, depending on customer demand. When sold alive, the dogs are typically in critical condition—severely ill, injured, and weakened due to the grueling capture and transport process. DMFI identified the largest distributor in a remote rural area approximately 40 km from North Balikpapan. This facility breeds and slaughters dogs on demand, operating as a centralized hub for the trade. Whether delivered live or as processed meat, the dogs supplied to restaurants in

Balikpapan and its southern districts are often dehydrated, malnourished, and close to death. The second distributor, located at KM 5 in Balikpapan, serves both the eastern and western parts of the city. It slaughters 2 to 4 dogs daily and sells approximately 5 kilograms of cooked dog meat per day. A third distributor, situated within the city limits, specializes in slaughtering dogs and supplying raw meat for retail sale (Four Paws, 2021, p. 4).

DMFI's investigation confirmed that 15 restaurants in Balikpapan openly sell dog meat. These establishments feature clear signage and actively promote dog meat dishes through traditional and digital channels. The coalition suspects that many more restaurants operate secretly, evading public scrutiny. Most restaurants rely entirely on external suppliers, with only a few reportedly slaughtering dogs on-site. On average, these restaurants sell around 5 kilograms of dog meat daily, both in-person and online. They purchase raw meat from distributors at Rp 30,000 to Rp 50,000 per kilogram, while live dogs are priced between Rp 350,000 and Rp 800,000 each. By selling a single dish of dog meat (250–300 grams) for Rp 25,000 to Rp 38,000, restaurants achieve a daily net profit of approximately Rp 250,000 to Rp 500,000 (Four Paws, 2021, p. 5).

### 3.3. Advocating for Health Security in Indonesia

Since its establishment in 2017, the Dog Meat Free Indonesia (DMFI) coalition has been at the forefront of highlighting health security concerns related to the dog meat trade and consumption in Indonesia. The coalition's goal is to protect dogs from being consumed by humans in the country. DMFI frames the dog meat trade as a significant threat to health security due to its association with rabies risks. The consumption of dog meat endangers both dogs and human health, increasing the risk that humans will contract rabies (Ferdinandez, interview, Dec. 6, 2024).

To advocate for health security, DMFI employs two main strategies: campaigns and negotiations. The coalition not only conducts online and offline campaigns, but also meets the government officials to lobby for a ban on the dog meat trade at regional and national levels (Ferdinandez, interview, Dec. 6, 2024).

In addressing health security concerns, the Dog Meat Free Indonesia (DMFI) coalition targets both the public and government authorities. The coalition raises awareness about the dangers of dog meat consumption and trade for health security and encourages public support to pressure local authorities to implement bans on the dog meat trade (Ferdinandez, interview, Dec. 6, 2024).

DMFI has organized both online and offline campaigns to oppose dog meat consumption and trade. On its official website, [www.dogmeatfreeindonesia.org](http://www.dogmeatfreeindonesia.org), the coalition advocates for a national ban on the dog meat trade, urging President Joko Widodo to take decisive action:

"I urge you [President Joko Widodo], on behalf of all dogs and the vast majority (93%) of the Indonesian population who never consumes dog meat, to please take action to safeguard Indonesia's dogs from cruelty and the nation's health by ending the cruel and illegal dog meat trade."

The coalition used the campaigns not only to protest but also to raise public awareness about the threats posed by the dog meat trade. These initiatives have prompted the government to consider emergency actions to stop the cruelty and end the threat to human and animal welfare.

The official launch of the Dog Meat Free Indonesia campaign took place on November 2, 2017. During the launch, DMFI released its investigative findings, debuted a campaign film, and introduced an online petition. The coalition encouraged the public to support the campaign by signing the petition on its website. DMFI also promoted the petition widely through social media channels, such as Facebook and Instagram to maximize awareness (Dog Meat Free Indonesia, 2017b). This online petition became a key tool for DMFI to foreground health security concern while calling for an end to the dog meat trade. Through this petition, DMFI effectively framed the issue of dog meat trade and consumption as a critical matter of health security.

Although DMFI was officially established in 2017, various animal rights organizations had been independently investigating the dog meat trade across Indonesia since 2012. These groups joined forces in 2017 to form DMFI after recognizing

that working in isolation would make it difficult to stop the trade. This collaboration was crucial because the larger the coalition, the greater the pressure they could collectively exert on the government to enforce a ban on the dog meat trade (Ferdinandez, interview, Dec. 6, 2024).

In presenting the health security threats posed by the dog meat trade, DMFI provided the government with samples of the rabies virus detected in dog meat during its investigation (Ferdinandez, interview, Dec. 6, 2024). These samples served as evidence that dog meat consumption can lead to rabies infection. Across Asia, dogs are recognized as the primary transmitters of rabies (Windianingsih et al., 2004, p. 1389).

In Indonesia, from January to July 2024, there were 71 reported deaths attributed to rabies, including 27 in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). During the same period, NTT recorded 16,180 cases of probable animal bites. Indonesia has 26 provinces endemic for rabies, with NTT being the most affected. In 2023, this province reported 35 rabies-related deaths from 19,320 cases of suspected animal bites (Backhouse, 2024).

Some scholars have examined the risks associated with rabies in Indonesia. For instance, Caecilia Windianingsih conducted a study on a rabies outbreak in NTT, where dog meat consumption is permitted. This epidemic, which occurred between 1998 and 2003, claimed the lives of 113 people. In response, local authorities implemented a mass culling of dogs to halt the spread of rabies linked-dog meat consumption. From 1998 to 2001, authorities killed a total of 295,569 dogs (Windianingsih et al., 2004, p. 1390).

Despite this large-scale culling, efforts in Flores ultimately failed to fully halt rabies transmission (Windianingsih et al., 2004, p. 1393). Windianingsih further identified that the outbreak originated from three infected dogs transported from Buton Island, Southeast Sulawesi, to Flores. Because the initial rabies infection went undetected, other dogs in Flores became infected, which in turn caused widespread fatalities. The first confirmed case of rabies in East Flores was reported in September 1997 (Windianingsih et al., 2004, p. 1390).

In 2008, Bali experienced a rabies

outbreak that resulted in 169 human deaths (Naipospos, 2018). The virus is believed to have been introduced to Bali by rabies-infected dogs brought by fishermen traveling from Sulawesi. These fishermen reportedly transported the dogs onboard as food, since certain Sulawesi tribes consume dog meat, without realizing the animals were rabies carriers. The virus subsequently spread across the island through dog bites. Traditionally, the Balinese population does not consume dog meat; instead, dog meat consumption in Bali is thought to have been introduced by migrants from Sulawesi (Mahardika et al., 2014, p. 1152).

The rabies outbreaks in both Bali and Flores illustrate that dogs are carriers of the rabies virus and are therefore unsafe for consumption due to the risk of transmission and resulting fatalities. Nevertheless, dog meat consumption persists in Indonesia. Dogs are frequently kidnapped, subjected to cruelty, slaughtered, and then sold in eateries, particularly in cities such as Jakarta and in provinces like Central Java. According to investigations by Dog Meat Free Indonesia (DMFI), approximately 90% of dogs killed for meat in Central Java are sourced from West Java cities, including Cianjur, Pangandaran, Sukabumi, Garut, and Tasikmalaya. DMFI reported that around 13,700 dogs are smuggled into Central Java each month, a practice that endangers residents because West Java is not rabies-free (Animal Welfare Indonesia, 2023).

As part of its online campaign advocating health security, DMFI released investigative videos documenting the entire process of the dog meat trade—from the capture of dogs to their transportation and eventual slaughter. These videos expose the extreme cruelty endured by the animals. Traders violently seize dogs, confine them tightly in cages and sacks, and transport them under harsh conditions. The dogs suffer severely from heat and pain during the long journeys, with their mouths bound so tightly that breathing becomes difficult. Upon arrival at slaughterhouses, the dogs are brutally killed (Dog Meat Free Indonesia, 2017a).

By December 2024, more than 1,155,955 people had signed an online petition supporting DMFI's campaign for health security. Through this petition, signatories called for a nationwide ban on the dog meat



trade, urging President Joko Widodo to take action. The petition emphasized the significant public health threat posed by the potential spread of rabies through the dog meat trade. DMFI demands that the president end this cruel industry, both to protect dogs from suffering and to safeguard the majority of Indonesians from infectious diseases linked to dog meat consumption.

DMFI has also organized rallies in various cities, delivering public speeches on the importance of health security to advocate for an end to the dog meat trade and consumption. These rallies are held in public spaces to attract media attention, with the aim of raising public awareness through coverage by news outlets (Ferdinandez, interview, Dec. 6, 2024).

The first rally took place in Surabaya, East Java, on December 10, 2017. During the event, petition supporters marched through the streets to raise political awareness about the suffering of tens of thousands of dogs slaughtered for meat in Indonesia. The rally was coordinated by eight local pro-animal welfare organizations, including Surabaya Save Paws, Surabaya Dog Lovers, and Loving Dog's Community. Participants carried posters and flags bearing slogans such as "Stop Eating Dog Meat Now" and "Be Part of Our Campaign and Together Let's End This Cruelty" (Dog Meat Free Indonesia, 2017b).

In the wake of the Surabaya march, demonstrations spread to other cities in support of health security. In February 2018, hundreds of individuals rallied over two days across five major cities—Surabaya, Surakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta—demanding an end to cruelty against dogs. These protests later extended to additional cities associated with the dog meat trade, including Malang, Semarang, and Manado. By November 2018, hundreds of demonstrators had gathered in these locations to pressure local governments to outlaw the dog meat trade and close eateries serving dog meat. These rallies served as platforms to emphasize the urgent need to stop animal cruelty, with participants carrying flags, banners, and posters bearing messages such as "Dogs are Not Food," "Dogs are Our Friends," and "Dogs Deserve Better" (Dog Meat Free Indonesia, 2018c).

In addition to public demonstrations, DMFI engaged in formal advocacy by raising awareness of health security and calling for regulated bans on the dog meat trade during meetings with government officials. For example, in February 2018, Karin Franken, DMFI's national coordinator, met with Sri Hartati, head of the animal health division at Jakarta's Agriculture and Marine Agency, to increase the city government's awareness and demand immediate action to end animal cruelty. During the discussion, Franken highlighted the large-scale transport of captured dogs across Java for consumption and urged officials to acknowledge the serious health risks posed by the dog meat trade, particularly the potential transmission of rabies to humans (DMFI (@dogmeatfreeindonesia), 2018).

DMFI continued its health security advocacy during the National Coordination of Animal Welfare meeting held on August 1–2, 2018, where representatives met with Syamsul Ma'arif, Director of Veterinary Public Health at the Ministry of Agriculture. At this meeting, DMFI drew on findings from its nationwide investigations documenting the suffering of dogs in the dog meat trade to emphasize the urgency of the issue and to press for a formal government commitment to enact a nationwide ban. DMFI coordinator Merry Ferdinandez stated, "It will be hard to realize Indonesia's pledge to be rabies-free in 2020 unless we execute a regulation to stop the dog meat trade soon" (Dog Meat Free Indonesia, 2018a). She delivered this message to representatives from livestock and animal health departments, as well as animal quarantine agencies from all Indonesian provinces.

Similarly, DMFI coordinator Lola Webber, co-founder of the Change for Animals Foundation, urged the central government to take decisive and immediate measures to ban the dog meat trade. In her speech, she described the cruel realities faced by dogs in the trade: "Our investigations have revealed that each month tens of thousands of dogs are being slaughtered to supply Indonesia's dog meat trade. Markets and slaughterhouses resemble scenes from a horror movie. This is the grim reality for dogs caught in Indonesia's dog meat trade. They are confined in tiny cages or burlap sacks with their mouths tightly bound, barely able to

breathe. They watch as other dogs are beaten and burned alive, awaiting their own turn" (Dog Meat Free Indonesia, 2018b).

The coalition has pushed the government to ban the dog meat trade not only by presenting findings from its investigations but also by providing legal grounds that could be used to implement such a ban, explained Adrian Hane, Legal and Advocacy Manager of the Jakarta Animal Aid Network (JAAN), a DMFI member organization. During meetings with government officials, DMFI presented the legal provisions violated by dog meat traders, using these regulations to strengthen its advocacy for a nationwide prohibition. These include Article 302 of the Criminal Code, Law No. 41 of 2014 on Animal Husbandry and Animal Health, and Government Regulation No. 82 of 2000 on Animal Quarantine. Adrian recalled that in these meetings, DMFI emphasized that the dog meat trade violates Article 302 of the Criminal Code because it constitutes animal abuse. The trade subjects dogs to harm and injury for profit (Adrian, interview, Dec. 7, 2024). According to DMFI's advocacy, the government must prohibit the dog meat trade since it falls under the definition of animal abuse in Article 302—intentionally causing animals prolonged illness, disability, severe injury, or death. DMFI's investigations provide evidence of such abuses within the dog meat trade (Adrian, interview, Dec. 7, 2024).

For DMFI, enforcing these laws is crucial to ensuring that domestic animals receive the "Five Freedoms" as defined by the World Organization for Animal Health: freedom from thirst, hunger, and malnutrition; freedom from discomfort; freedom from pain, injury, and disease; freedom to express normal behavior; and freedom from fear and distress. DMFI incorporated these principles into its advocacy during negotiations with local governments (Bagja, interview, Dec. 6, 2024).

On June 17, 2019, DMFI met with Juliyatmono, the Regent of Karanganyar, to highlight the prevalence of the dog meat trade in Central Java. In this advocacy effort, the coalition framed the issue as a health security threat, providing the regent with an

investigative report detailing the cruelty inflicted on tens of thousands of dogs each month in Central Java, including Karanganyar. DMFI also outlined the regional regulations that the regent would need to enact in order to protect domestic animals and safeguard the public from the risk of rabies infection.

Following its meeting in Karanganyar, DMFI continued its advocacy in Sukoharjo on July 25, 2019, where it met with Widodo, the Second Assistant to the Regional Secretary, along with officials from multiple agencies, including agriculture and fisheries, trade and small and medium enterprises, public order, and local police. This meeting enabled the coalition to advocate for urgent measures that the local government needed to implement in order to immediately halt the dog meat trade in Sukoharjo.

DMFI escalated its advocacy to the provincial level by meeting with Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo on December 3, 2019. During this meeting, DMFI presented its investigative findings, underscoring the severity of the dog meat trade, which results in the deaths of thousands of dogs each month in the province. The coalition called for the governor's commitment to end this practice.

After securing Ganjar Pranowo's pledge to combat the dog meat trade in Central Java, DMFI concentrated its efforts on the city of Surakarta, identified as the epicenter of this trade in the region. Coalition investigations revealed that at least 80 eateries in Surakarta sold dog meat dishes, with an estimated 85–90 dogs slaughtered daily in the city, many of which were sourced from West Java. To intensify pressure, DMFI submitted formal letters to city authorities, organized demonstrations at city hall, and sought an audience with Surakarta's mayor. On September 21, 2022, DMFI coordinator Mustika met with Surakarta Mayor Gibran Rakabumingraka, urging him to ban the dog meat trade and close all eateries serving dog meat across the city. This appeal was framed in terms of public health concerns and violations of animal welfare. Mustika stressed that the dog meat trade posed significant risks to public safety in Surakarta due to the potential spread of rabies through consumption (Anugrahanto, 2022).

DMFI faced difficulties in persuading local governments to recognize the dog meat

trade as a human security threat. In Surakarta, for example, the city government argued that many residents depended on the trade for their livelihoods. As a result, the administration claimed it could not force its citizens to abandon the practice, given the lack of alternative employment opportunities (Ferdinandez, interview, Dec. 6, 2024).

Similar resistance was encountered in Yogyakarta. According to Animal Friends Jogja (AFJ), a DMFI member organization, the local administration disregarded the coalition's investigative findings on the dog meat trade in the province. Elsa Lailatul Marfu'ah, AFJ's program manager, shared that the Yogyakarta government lacked the political will to enact a ban. While officials acknowledged the risks when confronted with DMFI's reports and even promised to implement a prohibition, no such regulation has been introduced due to this lack of political commitment. Consequently, DMFI continues to press the Yogyakarta government to outlaw the trade through ongoing advocacy and campaigns (Marfu'ah, interview, Dec. 6, 2024).

### **3.4. Addressing Health Security Concern through Local Regulations**

The health security concerns raised by Dog Meat Free Indonesia (DMFI) through its advocacy and lobbying efforts have contributed to the enactment of bans on the dog meat trade in at least 80 cities, regencies, and provinces. This demonstrates the impact and persuasiveness of the coalition's health-focused messaging. In response to the risks emphasized by DMFI, local governments have taken legislative action to address these threats. Regions such as Karanganyar, Sukoharjo, and Salatiga have introduced bans aimed not only at preventing animal cruelty but also at protecting public health, particularly by reducing the risk of rabies transmission. Karanganyar was the first regency to enact such a ban. In September 2019, Regent Juliyatmono issued Regulation No. 74/2019, which focuses on monitoring veterinary public health in slaughterhouses and the sale of animal meat products. This regulation applies veterinary science principles to prevent zoonotic diseases, including rabies, thereby aiming to protect human health. Specifically, Article 9 of the

regulation prohibits any individual or entity from circulating or distributing non-food meat intended for human consumption—the term “non-food meat” referring to dog meat (Juliyatmono, 2019).

This local regulation was based on Circular No. 9874/2018, issued earlier by I Ketut Diarmita, Director General of Animal Health and Husbandry at the Ministry of Agriculture, on September 25, 2018. The circular instructed local governments to intensify surveillance of the dog meat trade and distribution. It classified dog meat as a non-food product and directed local animal health and husbandry agencies across Indonesia to prohibit its trade and distribution, while also raising public awareness about the zoonotic disease risks associated with its consumption. The central government further emphasized the importance of stricter oversight of dog meat trade and distribution within local jurisdictions (Diarmita, 2018).

Juliyatmono's initiative encouraged other cities in Central Java to follow Karanganyar's lead, including Wonogiri, Sukoharjo, and Salatiga. For instance, in October 2020, Sukoharjo Regent Wardoyo Wijaya issued Regulation No. 5/2020 concerning the management of street vendors, with Article 34 explicitly banning the trade of non-food meat for consumption. Article 41 of the regulation outlines various penalties for violators, ranging from warning letters and business permit revocation to the demolition of food stalls selling illegal meat (Wijaya, 2020). By November 2021, the regent actively enforced the ban by rescuing 53 dogs smuggled in a truck, where they were cruelly confined with mouths bound (Ewe, 2021). The smuggler, Guruh Tri Susilo, was sentenced in April 2022 to 1.5 years imprisonment and fined Rp 150 million (Isnanto, 2022). Earlier, another smuggler, Suradi, received a 10-month jail term and a similar fine in October 2021 for transporting 78 dogs from West Java to Surakarta for consumption (Dewantara, 2021). Suradi's conviction marked Indonesia's first legal punishment of dog meat traders under animal health and food safety laws, representing a milestone in the global movement protecting dogs from trade and human consumption.

In 2021, Salatiga Mayor Yuliyanto issued Circular No. 510/2021, banning the

trade and distribution of dog meat by emphasizing that dogs are not livestock and dog meat is not food. The circular sought to prevent the spread of zoonotic disease and reaffirmed the city's commitment to enforcing the ban and raise public awareness about rabies risks tied to dog meat consumption (Yuliyanto, 2021). Mayor Yuliyanto expressed his hopes that this ban would inspire other regions to join the movement to protect dogs and build a wide-scale, collective effort: "By making this ban, we hope that other regions will soon follow so that this can become a comprehensive and massive movement. This cannot be done by the Salatiga government only. Other governments also have a role and society must join this movement too" (DMFI, 2021).

Following Salatiga, Semarang, the capital of Central Java, also joined the campaign. On January 27, 2022, Mayor Hendrar Prihadi issued Circular No. 426/2022, making Semarang the first provincial capital to ban the dog meat trade. The circular was framed as a preventive measure to protect the public from rabies risks. Mayor Hendrar pledged strict enforcement and penalties for offenders, aiming to end the cruelty dogs suffer for the trade (Pemerintah Kota Semarang, 2022). Soon after, Medan became the first city in Sumatra to enact a similar ban in April 2022. Mayor Bobby Nasution issued Circular No. 440/2022, affirming the city's commitment to enforce the ban, strengthen trade supervision, and educate the public about the zoonotic disease danger associated with dog meat consumption (Asih, 2022).

Central Java was the first province in Indonesia to urge all of its cities and regencies to impose a ban on the dog meat trade. In July 2022, the Central Java Animal Husbandry and Health Agency issued Circular No. 524.3/2022, calling on all 35 regencies and cities within the province to prohibit the trade. In the circular, Agus Wuriyanto, head of the agency, underscored the importance of formal written bans at the local level, stricter controls on the issuance of veterinary health certificates for dogs, and enhanced public awareness campaigns on the health risks associated with consuming dog meat (Saputra, 2022). Following Central Java's lead, West Java joined the movement in

October 2023. The province's Food Security and Livestock Agency issued Circular No. 7705, aimed at prohibiting and halting the dog meat trade across the province.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study found that Dog Meat Free Indonesia (DMFI) strategically framed dog meat trade in Indonesia as health security issue in order to stop the practice of trading and consuming dog meat in the country. This coalition highlighted both the cruelty inflicted on animals and the severe health risks to humans, particularly the potential transmission of rabies and other zoonotic diseases through dog meat. To amplify awareness, DMFI actively collaborated with government institutions and local authorities. Its advocacy included organizing public demonstrations, launching online petitions, and leveraging social media to educate communities about the dangers of dog meat consumption.

The coalition also mobilized public participation through digital platforms, urging both national and regional governments to enact bans. As a result of these sustained efforts, DMFI successfully influenced decision-makers in at least 80 cities and regencies to introduce prohibitions. These campaigns were reinforced by the support of national and international animal rights advocates. Operating under the DMFI banner, various non-state actors joined forces to highlight the health security risks of the dog meat trade, pressuring the Indonesian government to follow the example of countries such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Philippines, where the practice has already been outlawed. This advocacy elevated the issue to the international stage, attracting global attention and garnering support from human and animal rights activists calling for a nationwide ban in Indonesia.

This study explains health security concerns as the major factors driving the increase in regional bans on the dog meat trade in Indonesia. However, it has not yet examined the effectiveness of these bans in curbing the practice of dog meat trading and consumption. This gap highlights an important area for future research.

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