

Short Communication

CRUELTY TO DOGS: A SURVEY OF RESPONSES IN BUKURU METROPOLIS, JOS-NIGERIA

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INTRODUCTION

The word dog refers to the domestic pet, *Canis lupus familiaris*. Dogs are in the order *Canivora*. Recent genetic and DNA evidence (Lindblad, 2005) has shown that they were domesticated from wolves 100,000 years ago. Dogs like humans are highly gregarious (Wiki-Dog, 2006), the similarity in their overall behavioural pattern accounts for their trainability, playfulness and the ability to adapt into human households and social situations (Villa, 1997). Dogs are not included as food animals (Gracey, 1989). Since domestication they have lived and worked loyally with humans, thus earning them the unique sobriquet "man's best friend". Despite the good attribute of these animals a number of countries in the world breed and slaughter them for meat (Villa, 1997; Wiki-dog, 2006). Cruelty is defined as the readiness to cause pain or suffering to others (Advanced Learners Dictionary). Cruelty to animals is further defined as the treatment that causes unacceptable suffering or harm to animals (Munro, 1999). The term unacceptable suffering varies: a school of thought considers only suffering inflicted for sadistic reasons as cruelty, whereas the other school of thought included suffering inflicted for reasons such as, fur production, meat and animal testing or vivisection (Munro, 1999). Jurisdictions around the world have enacted statute prohibiting cruelty to animals. These statutes provide minimal care of animals, but do not require optimal or mandate kindness or love. They require that animals be provided with shelter, food, water and medical treatment (Arnold, 2004). Most people keep dogs not as pets, but for security reasons (Tafaderma, 2006) and in Nigeria, their meat is popularly referred to as '404' or 'dogmycin'. The meat is a special delicacy amongst some tribes of Plateau State and other tribes in Nigeria (Tafaderma, 2006) and regarded as "the tastiest of all meat" by the Chinese philosopher Menacius, 372 - 289 (Transition on-line, 2006). This study was conducted to assess handling and killing of dog at dog markets in Bukuru metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria. Respondents' view on legislation on inhumane treatment and banning of dog killing for meat and why people eat dog meat was also assessed.

KEYWORDS: Cruelty, Dogs, Survey, Bukuru, Nigeria

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Survey Site

Bukuru is located at latitude 9° 47' N and longitude 8° 51' E, and about 10 miles from Jos. It is the oldest and most densely populated settlements of Jos South Local Government area of Plateau State, Nigeria. The dog market

in Angwan kare, along the Jos-Bukuru express road was visited. Agwan kare serves as the central distribution point of dog meat to neighbouring villages and Jos metropolis. About 2 kilometres from Agwan kare is the major dog meat spot called Kugiya, where hundreds of people come to buy boiled or roasted dog meat.

Oral Interview

A survey was carried out to assess methods of handling and killing of dog. Respondents' view on legislation on inhumane treatment and banning dog killing for meat and why people eat dog meat was also assessed. One hundred (100) people were randomly selected and assessed by the use of questionnaires, while twenty (20) dog meat sellers at the various dog meat spots in Kugiya, Angwan Doki and Angwan Kare respectively in Bukuru metropolis were orally interviewed. Parameters assessed were

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ninety percent of the respondents were against inhumane handling of dogs. Seventy-six percent (76%) of the respondents were not comfortable with the handling and execution of dogs, 74% would support any legislation banning cruelty to dogs while 52% will not support legislation banning eating of dog meat (Table. I). This is an indication that there is a lot wrong with the treatment of "man's best friend".

It was also observed that women trek long distances with sick and emaciated dogs tagging behind from different parts of Jos to Angwan kare. On arrival these dogs are kept without adequate food and water in confinement in very dirty environments for an average of 4-7 days before being displayed in the market for sale (Fig. 1 and 2). Majority of dogs killed for meat are either stolen or sold by their owners to meet financial needs.

The methods by which dogs are killed are cruel and inhumane. Some of the dogs are clubbed to death or strangled using wire strings tied around the neck (Fig. 3). Others are hung on trees or on iron pillar until they die (Fig. 4). Strong and very aggressive dogs are held by the hind limbs and their head smashed against a wall or tree, while others are pinned to the ground before their throats are brutally slit open with a knife. Dogs are usually prepared and processed by burning their skin with kerosene in very dirty environment (Fig. 5) or dropped into boiling water. The methods of

killing observed in the study were similar to those reported in China and South Korea (Captive Animals, 2006; In defence of Animals, 2006; and Seoulsearch.com, 2006).

The survey revealed that 66% of the respondents did not see anything wrong with eating dog meat and 56% indicated that they will oppose any legislation prohibiting the eating of dog meat since it is culturally acceptable and individuals have the right to eat the type of meat they desire however, only 38% of the people interviewed affirmed that they eat dog meat.

Dog meat is eaten for reasons such as: its taste; its medicinal effect as a cure for malaria fever; a source of protection against the attack of evils spirits/witchcraft and aphrodisiac effect. The reasons were similar with those given in China and South Korea (Ceeol.com, 2006; Lebanolinks.com, 2006; Transition on-line, 2006).

All dog meat sellers stated that the male genital parts of the dog are exclusively reserved for special people and sold at an exorbitant price; it is believed that it increases sex drive and cures impotence. The survey further revealed that averages of 200 dogs are killed daily at the various dog markets, the number increase during festive periods. It was also gathered that consumers of dog meat cuts across all ages, gender and educational background. The practice is culturally acceptable and tolerated by most of tribes in Plateau State and other parts of Nigeria.

Nineteen out of the twenty, representing 95% of the dog meat sellers orally interviewed in Kugiya and Agwan Kare in Bukuru were women (Fig. 6), while men are involved only in scouting, killing and processing of the carcasses of dogs. This is consistent with the findings of Tafaderma (2006) and Viet Nam (2006).

TABLE 1: Response of people to cruelty to dogs.

Question	No	Yes	Indifferent	Total	%No	%Yes	%indifferent
Do you eat dog Meat?	62	38	0	100	62	38	0
Do you think eating Dog meat is wrong?	66	14	20	100	66	14	20
Should eating dog Dog meat be Prohibited?	56	26	18	100	56	26	18
Are you comfortable With the way dogs are Handled and Slaughtered?	76	16	8	100	76	16	8
Will you support Legislation banning Cruelty to dogs?	8	74	18	100	8	74	18
Will you support Legislation banning Eating of dog meat?	52	24	24	100	52	24	24
Do you think It is right for dogs To be maltreated and Killed inhumanely?	90	4	6	100	90	4	6



FIGURE 1: Sickly dogs tied to a tree in a dirty environment waiting for prospective buyers.



FIGURE 2: Buyers and sellers in one of the dog markets bargaining on dogs.



FIGURE 3: Dog strangulated to death by application of pressure around the neck by a string.



FIGURE4: Dog brutally hanged on a tree.



FIGURE.5. Executed dogs burnt or dropped in buckets containing hot water before being prepared for meat.



FIGURE 6: Women selling prepared dog meat in one of the dog meat markets in Bukuru metropolis.

CONCLUSION

Cruelty to dogs will be very difficult to abolish. However, there is an urgent need for advocacy and outright campaign to stop cruel practices. The act of eating dogs will be a very difficult task to stop. Enlightenment campaign and the use of various media to educate people will go a long way in checking these cruel and gruesome practices. Tradition and culture plays a significant role in the number of people eating dog meat. A law banning the eating of dog meat will be an almost impossible task, as 52% of the respondents indicated that they will not support any law

banning the eating of dog meat.

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