

# BANNING THE DOG MEAT TRADE IN INDONESIA TO ACHIEVE RABIES-FREE STATUS BY 2030

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## Abstract

The first step to eliminating human rabies infection is by eliminating rabies infection in the dog population. One of the steps is to monitor dog traffic via strict quarantine protocols and official documentation. Dogs are smuggled from infected regions to non-infected regions inside the dog meat trade. This puts the public's health at risk of human rabies infection. An official government circular was released in 2018, in which it stated that dog meat is not recognized as a food source and that there should be a ban on the dog meat trade. This article is a literature review of the regulations that can be enforced to stop the dog meat trade and deter those involved in it. Data collection is carried out through literature research, official government documents, and government data banks. The Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 18 of 2009 and the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 41 of 2014 are often used to deter those involved in the dog meat trade. Eleven local governments have officially banned the dog meat trade, but not on dog meat consumption. The dog meat trade can be stopped through strict quarantine protocols, selective official documentation, and law enforcement. Dog meat consumption itself must be stopped through a holistic approach to permanently stop the dog meat trade.

**Keywords:** rabies infection, dog meat trade, dog meat consumption, law enforcement

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia lies in a tropical region and has relatively high humidity. In addition to its large and growing populations of zoonotic disease reservoirs, Indonesia has become favorable for vector-borne disease transmission, such as rabies [1]. Rabies is an endemic zoonotic disease in Indonesia that is believed to have started to spread during the 1880s. Currently, rabies has spread through 26 provinces in Indonesia. Only 8 out of 34 provinces are declared non-infected, but 4 of them are threatened (Table 1). The most recent outbreak of rabies happened in Dompu, West Nusa Tenggara in 2019 [2]. Between 2010 and 2018, the average number of rabies-

susceptible animal bites cases (GHPR) was 66,939, and only 74.8% of these received the anti-rabies vaccine (VAR). In 2019, there were 100,826 reported GHPR cases and only 67.1% of these received the VAR [3].

Table 1. Threatened and free regions in Indonesia

No.	Status	Provinces/Islands
1.	Threatened	DKI Jakarta, Central Java, DI Yogyakarta, East Java
2.	Free	Riau Islands, Bangka Belitung Islands, Papua, West Papua



Source: *One Health Roadmap National Rabies Elimination 2030*

Dogs are known as the primary vector in reported human rabies infection cases. With this in mind, it was estimated that there are 16,148,283 dogs in Indonesia, and 67.8% of them are populating the infected regions (Table 2). In an effort to prevent the further spread of rabies infection to non-infected regions, the government has issued regulations that prohibit the transport of rabies-susceptible animals, such as dogs, from infected regions to non-infected regions without legal documentation [4]. However, dogs from infected regions are still being transported to non-infected regions in the commercial dog meat trade. This is coupled with the fact that these dogs have no legal documentation and an obscure medical record. In DKI Jakarta alone, a threatened non-infected region, approximately 21,900 of these dogs are annually supplied from West Java, a moderately infected region [5].

Table 2. Dog population estimation in infected regions

No.	Region status	Population estimation
1.	Heavily infected	5,571,360
2.	Moderately infected	3,980,143
3.	Lightly infected	1,392,415
	Total	10,943,918

Source: *One Health Roadmap National Rabies Elimination 2030*

The smuggling of dogs from infected regions to non-infected regions certainly puts public health at imminent risk of rabies infection or, worse, an outbreak. This only benefits a small group of people that are involved in the capture and transportation of the dogs and are involved in processing and selling fresh or processed dog meat. Consumers of dog meat do not benefit from anything other than the risk of being infected with rabies or other zoonotic diseases. This makes the commercial dog meat trade a violation of the right

to life and the right to health. Thus, the commercial dog meat trade must be banned not only because of the risk but also the violation of rights.

As of 2018, the government, through the Directorate General of Livestock and Animal Health of the Ministry of Agriculture, has declared the commercial dog meat trade as illegal. Through a circular issued, the government prohibits the issuance of veterinary certificates for live dogs and dog meat for consumption. Local governments are also encouraged to issue an official written appeal letter, prohibiting the commercial dog meat trade in their respective regions. This article looked further into the regulations laid out in the issued circular as the legal basis for banning the commercial dog meat trade and the enforcement of those regulations. This article also briefly looked into the ban on the commercial dog meat trade imposed by the local governments.

## 2. Methods

This literature review was carried out through literature research to collect research articles, reports, regulations, and verdicts related to rabies and the commercial dog meat trade in Indonesia. Research articles and reports on rabies status and prevention were collected from scholar.google.com. Regulations related to the ban on the commercial dog meat trade were collected from peraturan.bpk.go.id. Verdicts related to the ban on the commercial dog meat trade were collected from putusan3.mahkamahagung.go.id.

## 3. Results

The circular issued by the government puts emphasis on increasing surveillance on the commercial dog meat trade and dog meat consumption. These regulations are used as the legal basis for banning the commercial dog meat trade:

1. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2009 on Livestock and Animal Health
2. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 41 of 2014 on the Change to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2009 on Livestock and Animal Health.



3. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2012 on Food.
4. Regulation of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia Number 95 of 2012 on Veterinary Public Health and Animal Welfare.
5. Regulation of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia Number 47 of 2014 on Zoonotic Disease Prevention and Control.
6. Regulation of the President of the Republic of Indonesia Number 48 of 2013 on Animal Husbandry.
7. Regulation of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia Number 82 of 2000 on Animal Quarantine.

**Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2009 jo Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 41 of 2014**

Article 46 Section (5) states that each person is prohibited from exporting and/or importing animals, animal products, and other items capable of being zoonotic disease media from infected and/or suspected regions to non-infected regions. Further, Article 89 Section (2) states that whoever exports and/or imports animals, animal products, or other zoonotic disease carrier media into non-infected regions from infected or suspected regions as mentioned in Article 46 Section (5), Article 59 Section (3), and Article 60 Section (1) will be sentenced to imprisonment for a minimum of 1 (one) year and a maximum of 5 (five) years and/or fined a minimum of Rp 150,000,000 (a hundred and fifty million rupiah) and a maximum of Rp 1,000,000,000 (one billion rupiah) [6,7].

**Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2012 on Food**

Article 1 Section (1) states that food is anything that comes from organic products obtained from agriculture, plantation, forestry, fisheries, livestock, and water, both processed and unprocessed, intended as food or beverages for human consumption, including food additives, raw materials, and other materials used in the process of preparing, processing, and/or making food or beverages. Further, Article 71 Section (2) states that each person

who organizes activities or processes for the production, storage, transportation, and/or distribution of food is obliged to: (a) meet the sanitary requirements; and (b) ensure food safety and/or human safety [8].

**Regulation of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia Number 95 of 2012**

Chapter II Part Two on Hygiene and Sanitation Guarantee in farms, production on non-food animal products, abattoirs, collection and sale, and transportation. Chapter II Part Three on Animal Products Guarantee through regulation of distribution, supervision of business units, inspection and testing, standardization, certification, and registration. Chapter III on Animal Welfare Implementation in capture and handling, placement and containment, maintenance and care, transportation, use and utilization, fair treatment in care, slaughter and killing, and medical practice [9].

**Regulation of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia Number 47 of 2014 on Zoonotic Disease Prevention and Control.**

Article 49 Alphabet b states that eradication of infectious zoonotic diseases is carried out by restricting the traffic of susceptible animals, animal products, and other high-risk items capable of being zoonotic disease media. In addition to this, Article 56 Section (2) states that animal, animal products, and other items capable of being zoonotic disease media can only be transported after meeting the technical veterinary health requirements (listed in Chapter VII of the regulation) [10].

**Regulation of the President of the Republic of Indonesia Number 48 of 2013**

Article 1 Section (3) states that livestock are animals whose products are intended to produce food, industrial raw materials, services, and/or by-products related to agriculture. Section (6) states that laboratory animals are animals that are specially kept as experimental animals, research, testing, teaching, and producing biomedical materials or bred as animal models for human diseases. Section (7) states that pets are animals that are specially kept for sports, enjoyment, and aesthetics [11].



### **Regulation of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia Number 82 of 2000**

Article 2, 3, and 4 Alphabet a states that items must be equipped with a health certificate issued by the competent authority in the country of origin and country of transit. Alphabet b states that items must be equipped with a certificate of origin from the place of origin for media classified as other objects. Alphabet c states that items must be brought through designated entry points. Alphabet d states that items must be reported and handed over to the quarantine officer at the entry point for the need for quarantine measures [12].

#### **4. Discussion**

Rabies prevention strategies that are implemented by the government include:

1. Mass vaccination
2. Rapid response and observation of rabies-susceptible animals
3. Delivery of information, education and communication (ICE) campaigns
4. Surveillance
5. Movement control
6. Dog population management
7. Capacity building
8. Integrated bite case management
9. Post-exposure treatment in humans

One of the identified constraints to these measures is the difficulties in monitoring and controlling animal movement [13]. With this in mind, several steps need to be taken by the Indonesia government [14]:

1. Optimizing quarantine measures, especially in official checkpoints.
2. Revitalizing and optimizing checkpoints located on the border of provinces and regencies.
3. Strict law enforcement at official checkpoints.
4. Quarantine measures at official checkpoints can be done by screening for vaccination records and serum sampling from each animal trafficked between regions.
5. Even though quarantine and livestock traffic control become quarantine officials' main responsibility, agencies and community involvement are

important for effective and efficient traffic control.

The commercial dog meat trade is not in line with the strategies mentioned in the previous paragraph. It entails the smuggling of dogs, which are classified as rabies-susceptible animals, from infected regions to non-infected regions. The smuggled dogs might have been infected prior to their capture and infected other dogs in the pound or during transportation [15]. Strict animal movement control, quarantine, and most importantly, law enforcement are then necessary to deal with the commercial dog meat trade.

According to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2012, dog meat is not listed as an organic product intended for human consumption. Dogs are not specifically bred as livestock [8]. This is supported by the Regulation of the President of Indonesia Number 48 of 2013. Nowadays, dogs are more recognized as pets, which are intended for sports, enjoyment, and aesthetics, not as food for human consumption [11]. With this interpretation in mind, it can be concluded that dog meat is not legally recognized as food, which then makes the commercial dog meat trade an illegal activity. But, this interpretation is still debatable because there is a cultural difference in how people treat dogs and what people consider as pets and food sources. This debate could be concluded if only the government had a comprehensive list of animals categorized as livestock, laboratory animals, and pets.

Due to the cultural difference, dog meat consumption is not considered illegal. The practice of consuming dog meat has existed since the pre-Islamic period and become a custom in some regions [16]. It was also thought to be one way to control the population of stray dogs in a region. The commercial dog meat trade then became an acceptable livelihood until the Directorate General of Livestock and Animal Health of the Ministry of Agriculture issued the circular [17]. Since the circular was issued, there have been two cases involving three suspects who were sentenced to imprisonment without probation and fined:

1. SBK was proven guilty of transporting rabies-susceptible animals from an infected region to a non-infected region. SBK was sentenced to 10 months of imprisonment without probation and fined Rp 150,000,000 [18].
2. GTS was proven guilty of transporting rabies-susceptible animals from an infected region to a non-infected region. GTS was sentenced to 16 months of imprisonment without probation and fined Rp 150,000,000. GTS was ordered by Suseno, the last suspect [19].
3. Suseno was proven guilty of transporting rabies-susceptible animals from an infected region to a non-infected region and was sentenced to 12 months in prison without probation and fined Rp 150,000,000. Suseno was the dog meat shop owner and the one who ordered GTS [20].

All three suspects were sentenced according to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2009 jo the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2014 [6,7]. The dogs supplied for the commercial dog meat trade are pets (65%), local dogs (8%), imported dogs (11%), stray dogs (13%), and hunting dogs (3%). Around 45% of the imported dogs do not have a veterinary certificate or a certificate of origin [21]. This violates the Regulation of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia Number 82 of 2000, Number 95 of 2012, and Number 47 of 2014 [9, 10, 12].

In regions where dog meat consumption is a custom, dog owners sometimes voluntarily give their dogs to dog meat shops, but in other regions they are stolen. For stolen pets, local stray dogs, and imported dogs, they are captured by using snare or poisoning and transported inside a sack with their mouths tied. They are starved and then killed by being poisoned or beaten to death. It is believed that their blood adds flavor to their flesh, so they are not slaughtered like livestock. It is clear that none of the five freedoms of animal welfare applied in the capture, transport, and killing of these dogs.

Animal welfare organizations are concerned about the threat to public health and the animal cruelty involved. Dog Meat Free Indonesia has campaigned and lobbied local

governments for the ban of the commercial dog meat trade. In 2017, Bali Province put a ban on the commercial dog meat trade. In 2018, Purbalingga Regency followed after the Directorate General of Livestock and Animal Health of the Ministry of Agriculture issued the circular. In 2019, Karanganyar Regency followed. In 2020, Sukoharjo followed. In 2021, Salatiga City followed. In 2022, Semarang City, Brebes Regency, Magelang Regency, Blora Regency, and Medan City followed.

Judging from how the commercial dog meat trade violates regulations mentioned in the issued circular, it must be put to an end. Unfortunately, the bans that have been upheld only ban the commercial dog meat trade, not the consumption of dog meat. As long as the demand for dog meat persists, we cannot put the commercial dog meat trade to an end. Persuasion through campaigns, education, socialization, and community involvement must be used, especially in regions where dog meat consumption is a custom. Only then, and with strict law enforcement, the dog meat trade can be ended, and Indonesia will be one step closer to becoming rabies-free.

## 5. Conclusion

The commercial dog meat trade involves the smuggling of dogs from infected regions to non-infected regions. The capture, transport, and killing of the dogs does not implement the five freedoms of animal welfare and threatens public health. These violate regulations mentioned in the circular issued by the Directorate General of Livestock and Animal Health of the Ministry of Agriculture and make the commercial dog meat trade illegal. Strict law enforcement for smugglers and shop owners and persuasion to stop the practice of dog meat consumption in society are needed to end the commercial dog meat trade and to bring Indonesia closer to becoming rabies-free.

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