

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 8, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As our nation continues to combat COVID-19 and seeks a vaccine or treatment to prevent further outbreak, we must also take swift action to address the root cause of this disease and prevent future transmissions of zoonotic diseases of this scale.

As you remember from previous correspondence, expert researchers linked the transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19 in humans to a specific live animal market in Wuhan, the capital city of China's Hubei province.¹ Despite the fact that the Chinese government has suspended the consumption and trade of certain wildlife species and the operation of live wildlife markets, there are still more common livestock markets where live animals like chicken, ducks, and rabbits—and even dogs and cats in some regions—are sold and slaughtered on-site for customers who want “warm meat.” These livestock markets can also be a breeding ground for pandemics the same way that the Wuhan market was for COVID-19. Should China's current ban on wildlife trade for the exotic food market be lifted, we could see another global outbreak of a viral zoonotic disease similar to SARS-CoV-2, SARS-CoV, and MERS. The brutal exploitation of wildlife and other animals needs to be banned permanently, including closing the loophole that allows the trade to continue for medicinal, fur, pets, display, and other purposes. We must also ensure that, once in place, the Chinese government actually prioritizes enforcement of the ban.

While we appeal to the Chinese government to continue the current ban on live wildlife markets and the consumption of certain wildlife, we strongly urge China to also shut down live livestock slaughter markets that can also be a breeding ground for future pandemics. Both types of markets provide an optimal environment for viruses to move from one species to another, mutating until eventually they are able to transmit to humans.

This is of particular importance as we once again approach the infamous and cruel Yulin Dog Meat Festival. Dogs and cats seen at the festival have been stolen from families, subdued and taken off the streets with poison, crammed into cages, stacked on top of one another in trucks, and brutally killed for human consumption. As with live wildlife markets linked to the spread of COVID-19, China's dog and cat meat industry, which facilitates massive trans-provincial transport of a large number of dogs and cats that are often sick, injured, and dying of unknown illnesses provide yet another opportunity for disease to spread between animals and humans.

¹ Singhal, T. A Review of Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19). *Indian J Pediatr* **87**, 281–286 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12098-020-03263-6>.

This is especially so at the Yulin festival because it involves the mass slaughter of dogs and cats and mass consumption of the meat in crowded restaurants and other catering facilities, guaranteeing proximity between humans and animals in unsanitary and inhumane conditions. When you signed the 2018 Farm Bill into law, you ensured the prohibition of the trade and consumption of dog and cat meat in the U.S., leading the world on this issue. Our legislation, H.Con.Res.71, will call on all nations to follow suit and end this abhorrent practice for good, limiting the potential for further disease in the future.

There is an opportunity once again for you to lead on this issue and to increase the scrutiny and pressure on China to expand and strengthen laws regulating live animal markets. Eliminating the availability and profitability of live animals for any private and underground trader or market not only protects Americans and people around the world from another overwhelming and devastating pandemic, but also livestock, dogs, cats, and wildlife from suffering in inhumane and distressing conditions.

President Xi Jinping's efforts to stem the spread of zoonotic disease by banning live wildlife markets and the consumption of certain wildlife should be acknowledged as a first step. However, we urge you to consider seeking the complete, permanent ban in China of both the live wildlife markets and the more traditional livestock markets including dogs and cats there, in order to truly address the risk of future pandemics stemming from these markets and to encourage President Xi to lead on this issue throughout Asia. We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress

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