

# **REPORT OF DOG AND CAT FUR TRADE IN CHINA**

August 2014



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*ACTAsia thanks Dogs Trust for support and funding the production of this report..*



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## **I. Introduction.**

China is the largest fur trading and processing country in the world, with 75% of all furs sourced globally, processed in China.<sup>1</sup> The demand for fur products is growing with the rise in economic standards and online marketing by fur retailers. Traditionally adults were the main consumers of fur products, but now younger age groups (male and female) are also targeted. Unlike in western countries, dogs and cats are openly used as a source of fur products in China.

The animal welfare implications of the fur trade are significant and of growing concern as the majority of Chinese fur farms have been established in the last ten – fifteen years and include dog, cat, fox, mink, raccoon dog and rabbit.

In China, dogs and cats are openly used as a meat product, and their fur is utilised for various products. Some of the animals are bred specifically for these purposes, others are unwanted ‘companion’ animals. The dog and cat meat industry, sell the pelts to make fur coats (approx 12 dogs and 24 cats for each coat); other uses include trimmings for fashion items such as bags, clothes, blankets and other accessories. Official government reports on the fur industry do not separate dog and cat fur, but 10 years ago numbers of ‘companion animals’ used in the fur industry were estimated to be in excess of 2 million annually. It can be assumed that the numbers are now considerably higher and growing.

To generalise, the Chinese population have little understanding or concern with regard to the immense suffering of animals involved in the trade and are unaware that dog and cat fur is used in the production of a wide range of products. Therefore it is essential to raise public awareness on these issues. In western countries, the anti-fur movement had its greatest impact through public awareness campaigns, so ACTAsia has adopted this strategy for the No Fur China campaign, recognising that consumer awareness is an essential step towards reducing the use of fur and ultimately ending the fur industry.

ACTAsia’s No Fur China campaign aims to use an educational approach based on factual data, instead of a purely sensational approach, recognising that human behaviour and attitudes can only change through the process of education. Therefore ACTAsia works to create awareness through training, the media and social networking sites, so individuals can make informed choices.

ACTAsia’s ‘No Fur China’ campaign started in 2010, to coincide with the Chinese Year of the Rabbit February 2011. The annual Chinese New Year celebrations are the time of year when fur coats and accessories are purchased to mark this special time in the Chinese calendar. This is a boom time for fur retailers who maximise sales through ever increasing aggressive marketing tactics, especially targeting young people who see fur as a desirable fashion statement.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘75% of world’s fur processed by China: report’, wantchinatimes.com., accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2014, <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20130119000053&cid=1102>

It should be noted that currently an understanding of animal welfare is in its infancy in China; there are few animal welfare organisations; a lack of animal protection legislation and general indifference towards the widescale animal abuse and suffering.<sup>2</sup>

It is generally considered by western cultures that dog fur is the left over product from the dog meat trade, as dog skin and fur are not used by the dog meat eaters. This may have applied historically, however in the modern-day Chinese culture although there may still be an overlap, the dog and cat fur trade is clearly emerging as a ‘stand alone’ industry, as our investigations and research have clearly revealed. This has mainly come about through marketing influence promoting fur as fashionable and desirable, particularly to the new affluent younger generations living in the specially created economic zones. With increased spending power, the younger generation of both male and female Chinese have demands different to their parents and grandparents who were likely to eat dog meat, but unlikely to have owned fur items, as only the very rich people were able to buy furs as luxury items.

Today, young people in China want fur items as fashion statements and the demand is high. However they tend not to be interested in eating dog or cat meat, considering such food to be ‘unfashionable’!

### **1.1. Purpose of report:**

The purpose of this report is to help the reader understand the issues and implications for dogs and cats used in the fur trade in China.

### **1.2. Objectives:**

1. To create an understanding of China’s role within the global fur trade industry.
2. To highlight the supply and demand for fur production in China.
3. To detail the availability of dogs and cats which supply part of the fur trade; tracing the source; trading routes and sales outlets.
4. To highlight the immense suffering of dogs and cats involved in the fur trade.
5. To provide information relating to desk research; investigations; anecdotal evidence; comparisons with historical and current data.
6. To provide information relevant to ACTAsia’s No Fur China Campaign.

### **1.3. Methodology:**

Data collection for this report includes literature reviews, trade information analysis, online data search, field investigations in markets, and meetings with various individuals who have firsthand knowledge of the dog and cat fur issue.

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Changing China, Country status report within the political and social context’ ACTAsia for Animals, 2011, <http://www.actasia.org/changing-china.html>

## 2. Investigations relevant to dog and cat fur.

Guanzhou in Guandong Province, population 105 million.

This area is close to Hong Kong, well known as a 'dog eating province', so live dogs are available to buy at the markets for meat, their fur and skin 'torched' when purchased. Therefore there are no furs from these animals available to the fur trade.

The fur wholesale market in Guanzhou is a covered 4 storey building, where traders each have a shop area displaying countless pelts of various types of animals e.g. snow and blue foxes, mink, rabbits, raccoon dogs, cats, horses. When ACTAsia investigated, the shop sellers were openly willing to discuss and provide information on the pelts displayed, with regard to the type of animal, quality and origin. One seller claimed the dog fur was 'real German Shepherd' and 'real Golden Retriever'. It is estimated that one third of the fur sales in the wholesale market of Guanzhou city sell dog and cat furs, with 2 thirds made up from all other types of animals.

In addition, at wholesale markets in the northern Provinces of Heibei and Zhejiang, two of the main markets have hundreds of stalls selling fur pelts, with the demand for dog and cat fur steadily growing. All furs are available for export. (see following paras for detailed information)

### 2.1. Source of animals

#### a) Dog breeding farms

Many dog farms have been established in the last 10 years and now openly advertise that dogs farmed at their premises are bred for their meat and fur, also as breeding stock for those wanting to set up new farms. Many of these farms are located in Northern areas of China e.g. Shandong Province.

The farms promote the multiple uses of a dog, therefore the overall value of a farmed dog is increased and regarded as a 'high' economic farm animal. An advertisement on a dog farm's website states:

***Dog meat can be sold as a fresh product or processed food. Dog fur after tanning can be used for clothes, hats and shoes. The remaining parts eg. dog bones, paws, penises, or stones in dogs' gallbladder, kidney or stomach, can be sold for the use in Traditional Chinese Medicines (TCM)***<sup>3</sup>.

Pelts from Tibetan Mastiff; German Shepherd; Golden Retrievers; Husky; large mixed breeds, were the most commonly seen breeds during the ACTAsia investigations of the fur markets. This corresponds with the breeds of dogs used for meat. We were told by traders that the pelts are mainly sourced in northern China, which substantiates the dog farmers claims that their farms supply both the meat trade and the fur trade.

The grey fur of German Shepherd dogs is considered desirable for coats and trims and is priced higher than yellow fur: it is often labelled as fox or Asiatic raccoon, but there are

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<sup>3</sup> Shangdong LongDa Dog Farm, sldqy.com, accessed 28 Jan 2014, <http://www.sldqy.com/dyzs.asp?id=1>

also other pseudonyms. It is similar in appearance to the fur of coyote, raccoon, or other species commonly exploited for use as trimmings.

b) Owned, unwanted and stolen dogs:

Pet keeping culture has grown in China during the last 20 years. Sadly unwanted dogs are also increasing in China due to unregulated pet markets, irresponsible pet ownership, and lack of understanding of dog breeds and their behaviours. Unwanted dogs fill to over-capacity the private dog shelters and government dog pounds. During this research, animal protectionists informed ACTAsia they suspect that dogs from the dog pounds end up in the dog meat trade, as large numbers of animals often just disappear overnight. On some occasions animal protection groups have followed vehicles transporting dogs to dog markets in the north of China.

Stealing dogs from cities or villages is regularly reported in the Chinese media. Dog thieves travel around the cities and villages, operating as a team, usually with a driver plus one or two catchers. In cities, such dogs are usually small breeds (unlike the large breeds bred in the dog farms) as some city municipalities impose a height restriction on dogs kept as pets – this height restriction may vary from city to city, but is around 35 cm whereas in villages, such restrictions are not in force so dogs may be of any size. Stolen dogs are supplied to the meat markets.

Municipalities do have strategies for dog control, usually random culls when there are complaints from the public about aggressive or noisy dogs, also at times of general city clean-ups and maintenance.

c) Cat catchers:

Cat breeding farms supplying cat meat and fur, are less common than dog farms in China, with only a few cat breeding farms advertising cats as pets and for meat. Traditionally cats are regarded as a more useful animal than dogs and not considered to be such a nuisance; so there is less demand for cat meat in northern areas, where the cat is a popular pet. This may help to explain why cats are not widely exploited through organised farming.

Municipalities in China do not have regulations or licensing procedures for cat owners and do not catch stray or roaming cats, so the over population of cats is visible in public areas.

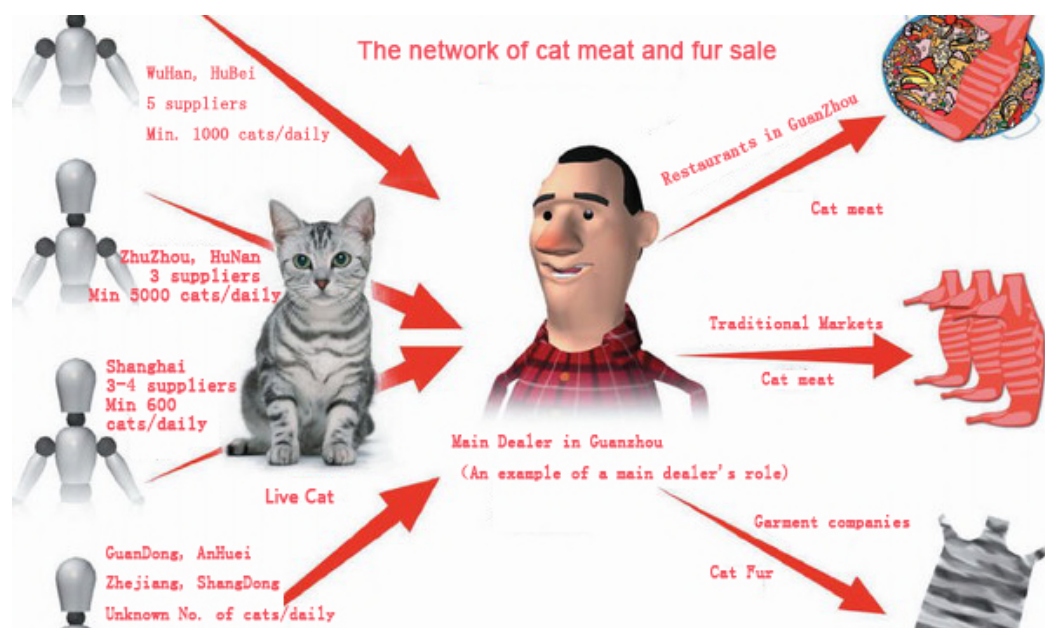
Cats are caught indiscriminately i.e. owned, lost, stray, in different areas of China by catchers who tend to work alone and at night. Once caught, cats are taken to regional dealers who transport them to wholesalers in southern regions, such as Guangzhou city, Guangdong Province, where they are slaughtered to supply restaurants and traditional markets. A cat catcher in Shanghai claimed that he could catch in excess of 10 -15 cats per night and sell at £1.50 per cat, earning up to £40 a night. According to him, his monthly income is more than he could earn as a chef in a local restaurant.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 'Cat fur sale network', [www.news.qq.com](http://news.qq.com/a/20100812/001220_3.htm), accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2014  
[http://news.qq.com/a/20100812/001220\\_3.htm](http://news.qq.com/a/20100812/001220_3.htm)

It is interesting to note that there are many cat protection groups in China with wide national action, especially in the northern provinces, but very few dog protectionist groups.

The contrast between cats being more desirable pets than dogs, is highlighted with the exploitation of dogs as revealed when using Chinese search engines for internet searches, i.e. numerous pages of listed dog farms with established web sites and sophisticated marketing ploys came up.



Source: China Southern Daily<sup>5</sup>

Immediately after slaughter, cat fur pelts are treated with salt as a preservative, to prevent the fur becoming detached from the skin. The pelts are sent to tanning factories in northern China, mainly in Heibei Province or to Guandong Province in the south.

Hebei Province has numerous fur trade markets, trading for centuries in all types of fur. One such market is in Day-in, renowned for trading and processing cat pelts to make or

<sup>5</sup> 'Cat fur sale network', [www.news.qq.com](http://news.qq.com/a/20100812/001220_3.htm), accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec, 2013  
[http://news.qq.com/a/20100812/001220\\_3.htm](http://news.qq.com/a/20100812/001220_3.htm)

trim a variety of products, often dying the furs to even out any colour discrepancies e.g. bags, children's jackets.

According to the Fur Trading Company in Hebei Province cat pelts are not only sourced from the cat meat industry, but are also killed primarily for their fur. Evidence based and anecdotal research show how the 'low cost industry' of stray cats caught to supply the fur fashion industry, becomes a lucrative industry of high priced garments and sadly in the absence of animal protection laws in China, this profitable business will continue to grow.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2. Financial elements.

### a). Cat fur

The cost of cat fur is determined by colour; black, white and tri-colour of calico pattern being the three main popular colours. The quality and price of cat fur are based on the colour and thickness of pelts, determined by the time of year i.e. a thick winter pelt of one solid colour costs more than a mixed colour pelt. A less dense summer pelt costs around half these prices.

Individual cat fur pelts tend not to be sold in wholesale markets, but many pelts of the same quality and colour may be joined together to make a large 'blanket' of fur and sold to factories to make garments. Likewise pelts of different colours are joined together to make a 'blanket' which can be used to make garments; accessories; fur rugs or wall hangings. (A 'blanket' is equivalent to a large roll of fabric when unrolled)

Size (cm)	Price	No of cats per blanket (Estimated)	Average price of per pelt in a wholesale market
50 x 100	£10	7-8	£1.25 – 1.43
55 x 115	£15	9-10	£1.50-1.66
65 x 175	£20	12-13	£1.50-£1.66
70 x 180	£23	15	£1.50

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid





Examples of cat ‘blankets’. Approx 8–15 cat pelts are joined together. ‘Bespoke blankets’ of specific patterns and colours can be made according to the buyers wishes.

a) For meat:

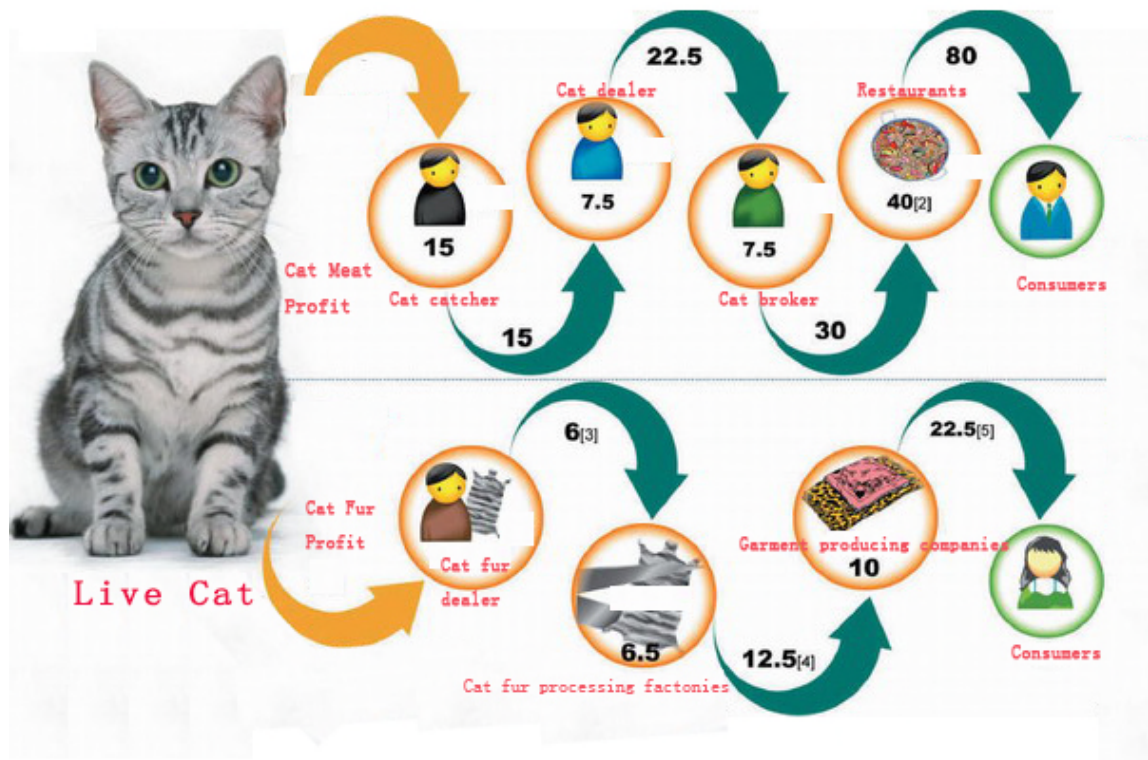
- i) live caught cat is sold to a dealer for £1.50
- ii) the dealer sells to restaurant for £3.00.
- iii) the restaurant prepares the food as a ‘hot pot’ at the cost to himself of £1.
- iv) the restaurant sells food to the customer for £8.

b) For fur:

- i) the cat fur pelt is sold to a dealer for between 60p - £1.60 depending on colour and quality of pelts.
- ii) the dealer sells to processing factory for £0.65. (eg. It takes approx. 40 pelts to make a coat)
- iii) processing factories prepare the pelts suitable for making garments/other products and sell to garment producing companies for £1.20 per pelt
- iv) Therefore to make a cat for coat using 40 pelts the cost is around £60 at the wholesale cost.
- v) Retail Price for a coat is sold for any amount in excess of £100.

It should be noted that these cats are captured from streets, there are minimum costs involved prior to production.

**The following diagram explains costs from cat source to retailer, based on the weight of a 3kgs’ cat.**



Source: China Southern Daily

Note that the diagram shows the costs in the Chinese currency RMBA, whereas this written text gives costs in UK pounds sterling.

## 2) Dog fur

The average cost of a dog pelt, 110 x 60 cm, 85x45cm, or 65x35cm is between £5-8. and can be dyed a different colours or kept as the original colour. A German Shepherd pelt is around £8. A Tibetan Mastiff pelt can be sold for much higher price between £500 – 1000 as considered to be a luxury item and would be used whole, not cut, and perhaps used as a cover on a settee; a rug or wall hanging.







### **2.3. Quantity and availability.**

Currently there are no official annual trading statistics for dogs and cats pelts as they are part of a general fur category. Statistics reported 10 years ago estimated that more than two million dogs and cats fur were annually killed for their fur. It is reasonable to assume that this figure is considerably higher now and increases year on year, as popularity and demand for fur products increases each year.

A shop in Guangzhou's wholesale market claimed they could sell up to 20,000 – 30,000 dog pelts per quarter. There are 550 shops in this wholesale market, with approx one third selling dog fur, therefore this wholesale market alone can trade many 14 – 21 millions of dog pelts per year!

It is reported that in excess of 100,000 cat pelts can be stocked in a factory at one time. A company stated that they make at least 10,000 garments from cat fur annually and export the products to Russia, USA and Italy.<sup>7</sup> To make 'a blanket', it takes approx 30 cat pelts, from which a full length coat could be made. Therefore using these figures, 300,000 cat pelts would make 10,000 coats. So using 40 or 50 pelts, then the number of live cat will be required up to 400 – 500,000 annually. This quality is only one company alone.

### **2.4. Transportation**

The transportation of live dogs and cats are often seen on motorways in different parts of China. Animal protectionists monitor the transportation of these animals and expose the animal cruelty involved. For example dogs or cats, are cramped into tiny cages where they cannot stand up, stretch, or turn around. The cages are stacked on top of each other. During transport, often as long as 19 hours, the animals cannot access water or food. Urine and faeces fall onto other animals bodies and at the end of the journey many

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid

animals are sick or injured. The following examples show the distances and hours between the cities on the regular trade route from North to South China. The hours listed below do not include the driver's rest periods during the journey.

From	To	Distance (miles)	Time
ZhuZhou, HuNan Province	Guangzhou	350 miles	7 hours
Wu Han, HuBei	Guangzhou	555 miles	10 hours
He Fei , An Huei	Guangzhou	700 miles	14 hours
Shanghai	Guangzhou	840 miles	17 hours
JiNing, ShangDong	Guangzhou	965 miles	19 hours

Apart from using lorries to transport a maximum quantity of animals, animal dealers also use logistic companies for transportation, where any numbers from a few hundred to a thousand animals, are transported in vehicles together with a variety of goods and supplies. These animals are often crammed into tiny cages which are piled on top of the other.



### 3. Production

#### 3.1. Slaughter

Dogs and cats are killed in large numbers in China for the fur trade. Sadly they all suffer tremendously before they die and the methods of killing are brutal and inhumane. Typically a dog is killed by dragging it out of the cage, then beaten with a stick or hammer until it is semi-conscious. A knife is used to pierce its throat.

It can be more difficult to handle a cat. One method is to put a cat into a sack and then use a hammer to strike the bag about 10-12 times. It was also confirmed by a cat fur trader during an interview for a documentary film that cats are often drowned in a large metal tank.<sup>8</sup> As each animal is taken from the tank and skinned, the pelt will be thrown back into the tank in readiness for the tanning process.



L: Hammer and knife used for killing dogs found in a slaughter house in Guangdong. R: Pool full of drowned cat.

#### 3.2. Products and sale:

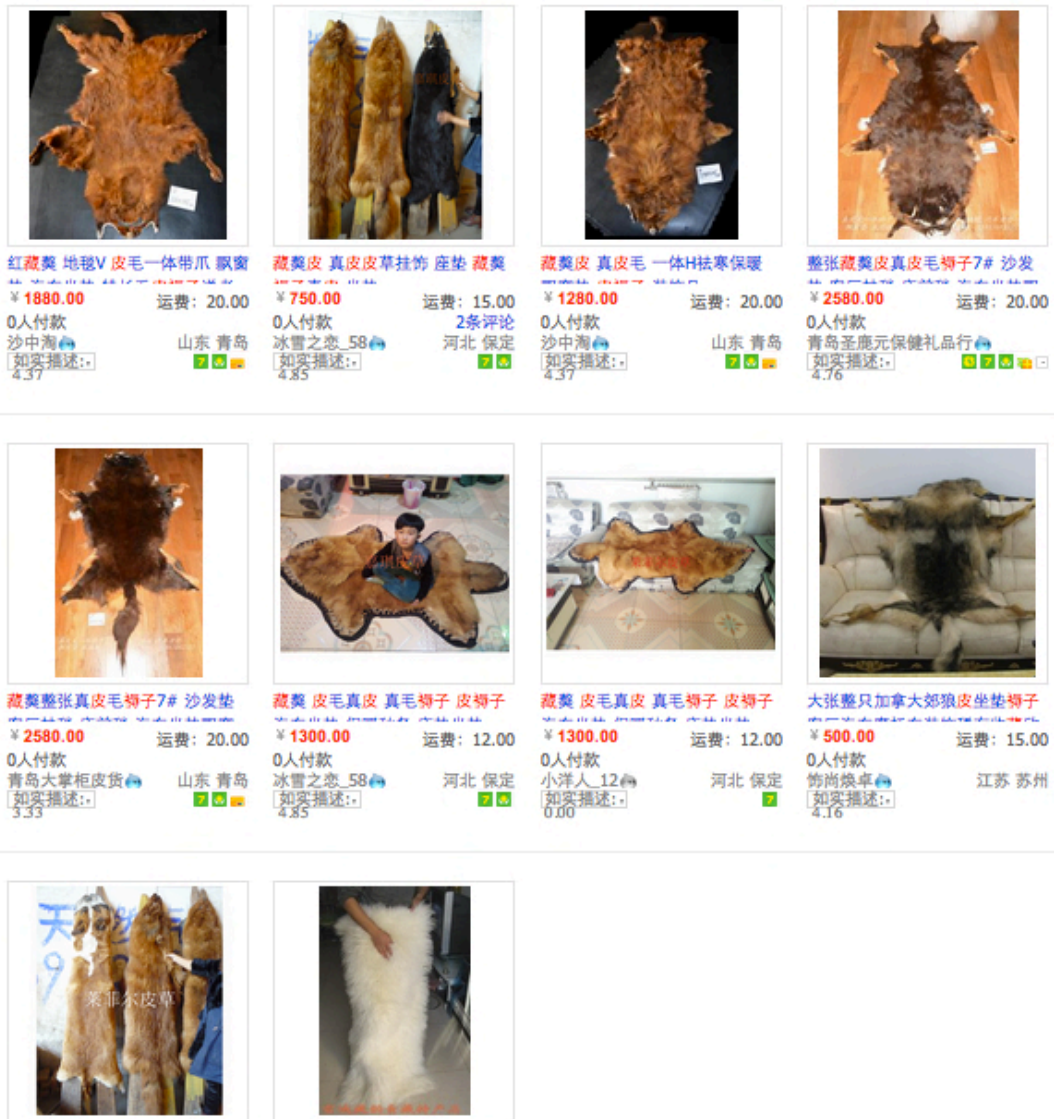
Dog & cat fur are used to make fur coats, fur trimming on clothing, bags, blankets and other accessories. It takes around 12 dogs or 24 cats to produce a fur coat. Dog fur is made into hat, blanket, car seat blanket, knee pads, trousers, boots, waistcoat, and jacket. Cat fur is used to make breeches; fur trim on coats collars and cuffs, scarves, shawl, waistcoat or jackets. blanket, waist warmers and leg warmers.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> 'San Hua' a documentary made by Director Guo. It documented the cat meat and fur trade.


<sup>9</sup> The result of dog fur search on Chinese ebay – taobao.com, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> Feb 2014, [http://s.taobao.com/search?initiative\\_id=staobaoz\\_20140506&js=1&q=%B2%D8%C6%A4%C8%EC%D7%D3&stats\\_click=search\\_radio\\_all%3A1](http://s.taobao.com/search?initiative_id=staobaoz_20140506&js=1&q=%B2%D8%C6%A4%C8%EC%D7%D3&stats_click=search_radio_all%3A1)








Traders in the wholesaler market said that dog fur boots are becoming popular and their sales had been increased through recent demand. The trader demonstrated how to use dog fur to produce fur boots in his shop.



	起批量	≥1 条
	价格	¥ 400.00 /条
	供货方式	现货 (1天内发货)
	发货\物流	河北 衡水 至 请选择 ▾   快递 ¥ 20
	成交\评价	0 条成交 暂无评价
支付方式		支付宝 网上银行

The sale of a cat fur blanket through online shop.



L: Cat fur 'blanket' is sold in a tourist city in China. R: Cat fur waistcoat for a child.

### 3.3. Labelling issue

Dog and cat fur are often mislabelled as a different type of fur, e.g. faux fur, or not labelled at all. There are no labelling laws or requirements in China, and no standardised labelling requirements between other countries, so consumers are ill informed.

It is common for dog or cat fur to be labelled as some other species, a species presumably thought to be more acceptable to foreign consumers.

Cat fur is commonly mislabelled as mountain cat, rabbit, fox, mink. Dogs are often labelled Asian wolf, coyote, yellow weasel. The wholesale market traders stated they label dog and cat fur as any species required by the customer. Often when asked what type of fur, the trader gives an answer that he thinks the potential customer will want to buy!.

### **3.4.Export**

All market traders interviewed confirmed that pelts are exported outside of China as well as used within China.

China appears to be the biggest dog and cat fur exporting country in the world, followed by other Asian countries e.g. Thailand and Philippines.<sup>10</sup> Chinese dog and cat furs are exported to Russia, Czech Republic, Canada, Greece, France and Germany. China is the second biggest commercial partner of Canada. Unlike countries e.g. USA, Australia, and EU, dog and cat fur are not banned in Canada, so the Canadian government intends to double commercial trade with China.

As the inhumane slaughter of dogs and cats is viewed as unacceptable in western countries, the Asian fur industry attempts to conceal the truth by intentionally mislabelling fur exports. With few exceptions, products from dogs and cats are never labelled as such. Dog fur is sold as 'Asian wolf', while cat fur is often labelled as 'rabbit fur'. Canadian laws do not require garment labels to include the origin of the fur, nor which species of animal it comes from.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "The Cat and Dog Fur Industry", The Winnipeg Humane Society, accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 2014  
<http://www.winnipeghumanesociety.ca/fur>

<sup>11</sup> 'Fur Trade-Cat and Dog Fur', Global Action Network, accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 2014,  
<http://www.gan.ca/campaigns/fur+trade/cat+and+dog+fur.en.html>



#### **4. Conclusion**

- Fur is a large global business and is a growing lucrative trade in China where most types of fur can be processed.
- Dogs and cats are historically regarded as ‘economic’ farm animals in China, not as companion animals as in western countries. However there is now a growing animal protection movement, supported by people who do keep animals as companion animals.
- Historically dogs and cats were primarily slaughtered for meat, however during the past 10 years with the economic success of China, the demand for fur garments from within China and from its international trading partners has grown and continues to grow.
- Research shows that the slaughtering of dogs and cats for fur is no longer a by-product of the dog and cat meat trade. It is clearly an industry in its own right as well as an integral part of the wider fur trade industry.
- It is accepted that some pelts from dogs and cats do enter the fur industry as a result of the meat industry, but there is robust evidence to show that if dog eating came to an end, the demand for dog and cat fur would continue, with supply sourced from the established dog breeding farms.
- The dog and cat fur trade is increasing rapidly year on year. It is claimed by some animal protectionists that if dog eating was prohibited, it would finish the dog and cat fur trade, as dog and cat fur is the by-product of the meat trade.
- However ACTAsia disputes such claims: To address just dog eating is highly unlikely to have any effect on the dog and cat fur trade as the organized industry of farming dogs for fur is now well established and not dependent on the dog eating trade.
- Ideally an integrated approach is required to address:
  - i) the promotion of dogs and cats as companion animals in China, each having an intrinsic value in society
  - ii) dog and cat eating practices and availability;
  - iii) the dog and cat fur production industry.
  - iv) animal protection legislation.