

Rome, March the 5th 2020



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Your excellency Li Ruiyu

On behalf of LAV (Italian NGO member of the Fur Free Alliance), I write to you at this tragic time when coronavirus continues to claim lives in China and across the world.¹

Firstly, LAV applauds the handling of the virus outbreak by China's Government, putting swift measures in place to safeguard public health in the long-term.

Secondly, while we wish to express our support for the proposed amendments to wildlife legislation in China to ban the consumption of wild animals as meat, we also wish to express our grave concern over a loophole in the law, confirmed by legal professionals.

On Monday 24 February 2020, the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress issued a complete ban on eating wild animals, with immediate effect, until the wildlife protection law is amended. However, a serious public health issue remains because the ban does not extend to any species of wild animal classified as 'livestock' under China's Animal Husbandry Resource List. As you will be aware, this list dates back to 2006, and comprises many species of animals bred for meat, fur or other derivatives. Examples of wildlife exempt from the ban include (but not exhaustively) fox, mink, raccoon dog, deer, rabbit and poultry, also incorporating many sub-species.

Some of the species listed have already been implicated in the transmission of coronavirus to human populations, with certain animals transmitting across non-human species, and others suspected to be the intermediaries between animal and human infection. Mink are particularly relevant as it has been shown the species could be a potential intermediary host of COVID-19, and were present at the Wuhan market in December 2019.

In light of the historical connection between SARS and civets and the uncertainty surrounding species of transmission, we collectively urge China's Government to expand the ban to all wildlife for all purposes, for the sake of global public health.

Until amendments to the law include a ban on the breeding, eating and consumption of derivatives from the species of wildlife listed as 'livestock', the risk to human health and ecological balance remains extreme.

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¹ Fur Free Alliance (FFA) is an international coalition of more than 40 charitable organisations working together to end the exploitation and killing of animals for fur. The Fur Free Alliance represents millions of supporters worldwide.



DALLA PARTE
DEGLI ANIMALI

We ask that all species of wild (captive) animal bred for meat, fur and other derivatives are included in the amendment to the wildlife law, and their breeding and consumption should be banned immediately.

Despite various efforts made by China to protect endangered species, the coronavirus outbreak demonstrates that breeding wild animals for their fur and meat, and the wildlife trade in animals and derivative products, are posing a huge threat to the people of China and the world at large.

In recent years, countries around the world are phasing out fur farming. Many luxurious fashion brands such as Hugo Boss, Armani, Prada, Burberry and many thousands of fashion retailers have also announced fur free policies and there has been a move away from fur designs by the fashion industry. We have also noticed that Chinese opposition to fur products has been increasing. The risk of breeding wild animals for their fur poses the same danger as wildlife 'wet' markets, threatening human health to an even greater extent, due to the high numbers of animals involved.

From SARS to coronavirus, viral epidemics demonstrate the human-animal-environmental disease interface, underlined by the One Health concept.² As coronavirus continues to spread, it is no longer a crisis faced by China alone, but has become a global challenge. The cost of manipulating nature for human consumption, such as by wildlife farming, is vast; it encompasses the loss of thousands of lives, including healthcare professionals who have sacrificed themselves to save others, the loss of billions of dollars to cover medical and business costs, and global restrictions on the movement of populations, manufacture and trade.

We can no longer treat the symptoms of viral epidemics without tackling the root causes, including the intensive breeding of wild animals for fur, medicine and meat.

Respectfully, we hope the following points shall be included in the amendment of the Wildlife Protection Law:

- Prohibit breeding of wild (captive) animals for commercial purposes such as fur
- Prohibit the use and trade of wildlife and derivative products for all purposes
- Prohibit the eating of wildlife and wildlife markets

Yours respectfully

best regards

Gianluca Felicetti
LAV's President

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² The Lancet **Planetary Health**, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(20\)30035-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(20)30035-8/fulltext)