

China Cancels Dog Cull in Earthquake Zone

Officials agree to address public health concerns about dogs by offering rabies vaccinations and veterinary care.

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An agreement was reached to end the killing of thousands of dogs in earthquake-devastated China after International Fund for Animal Welfare rescue leaders met with government officials in Zun Dao.

The “collective” culling of dogs ordered by authorities after the 7.9 magnitude quake in May was called off, and instead the government announced a plan to address public health concerns through an IFAW-sponsored anti-rabies vaccination and veterinary aid program in the southwestern province of Sichuan.

After the earthquake that claimed an estimated 80,000 human lives, IFAW sent more than six tons of animal food for some of the hardest-hit areas. The animal welfare organization met with Chinese officials in Zun Dao and offered humane alternatives to the dog cull.

Officials agreed to halt any dog culling operations in the area and are welcoming the efforts to address the public health concerns by offering rabies vaccinations and veterinary care. Help arrived immediately and on the first afternoon following the agreement, 50 family-owned dogs were given food, collars, leashes and appropriate vaccinations.

“This agreement is a major breakthrough,” said Jackson Zee, IFAW rescue leader. “Chinese media have been filled with reports of people evacuating with their pets, being comforted by their pets, and even saved by their pets after their homes collapsed, so we are delighted to see this next step as local officials are acknowledging that humane care of dogs, cats, and livestock can benefit both animals and people.”

“IFAW has been able to prove, through this work, that there is an alternative to mass culling of dogs due to fears about disease outbreak,” said spokesman Christopher Cutter. “It’s a very positive step for animal welfare in China.”

There are an estimated 4,000 owned dogs and 1,000 strays in Zun Dao and surrounding villages, and more relief efforts are expected in the coming days to increase the amount of aid for animals and people in the earthquake region.