Podberscek (2009) Good to Pet and Eat- The Keeping and Consuming of Dogs and Cats in South Korea

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In this article, Anthony L. Podberscek discusses people's attitudes toward the consumption of the typical household pet, specifically dogs, the major focus of this text. He goes into great detail about a current study being held in South Korea regarding the two sides of this controversial issue. The first side of the study covers the historical and current information on the status of dogs use in the culinary world. The second set of information reports the opinion of adult South Koreans regarding the consumption of dogs and whether or not it should be banned altogether.

The first part of this article discusses the "historical and current information on the roles of cats and dogs as pets and food in South Korea" (Podberscek 2008:617). Dog meat has a long history in Korea. It was the favored meat of the notorious Confucius, who brought back the concept of consuming dog meat after Buddhism became the state religion and greatly diminished the number of dogs consumed. Podberscek also notes that dog was considered medicinal in addition to a cheap source of protein.

Dog meat has helped people both medicinally and fed the poor; however, despite the pros of consuming dog, many regions do not approve of this practice. Several protests have sparked dispute between the people foreign to South Korea and their government. The foreigners who are unfamiliar with the customs of the South Koreans' find the consumption of dog to be vulgar and unnatural. They don't understand how any human can eat what they consider to be a lovable best friend. This controversy is typically discussed by the public right before South Korea hosts an international event, such as the World Cup and the Seoul Olympic Games (1998).

Although there have been several instances of protesting, there have also been a great number of attempts to make visitors tolerable of the South Koreans' choice in diet. For example, the South Koreans have changed the name of dog soup several times in an attempt to make the stew seem "more appealing" to foreigners (Podberscek 2008:620). The government has also banned the sale of dog meat in markets and relocated certain dog consuming restaurants to not offend those who are not used to these traditions.

In this article, Podberscek provides the reader with several minor facts about the consumption of dog meat. For example, the consumption of dog meat is increasing despite the protests from most Western countries. There is statistical proof that men consume more dog meat than women do. Almost half of the dogs bred on farms were eaten by humans (globally? this is surprising). In the opinion poll, the Korean interviewees said their main motive for eating dog meat was for social reasons, for the taste of it, and for health reasons. Finally, the dogs meant for meat were sold in the same location as the dogs meant to be pets, their only distinguishing characteristic being the color of the cage they are placed in. All of these are examples are mentioned in the text and I found them to be quite interesting.

The results of the study showed that 60% of adult South Koreans were in favor of using dogs as pets or companions and the majority (55%) were strongly against the use of dogs as food for human beings. The study also showed that pet ownership status had little to no effect on the opinions of the interviewees. In addition, only 24% of the respondents would be willing to ban the consumption of dog. Unfortunately, these results do not mesh well. If South Koreans were against the use of dogs as food then they should willingly support the ban of their consumption. However, the results do not fit this theory. The only explanation I can think of is solely cultural reasons. Dog has been a staple in the South Korean diet for hundreds of years, therefore some people may feel a deep connection with their ancestors by eating dog meat.

As an animal lover and current pre-vet student, it really bothered me to read about the way in which the dogs are killed for their meat. I understand and appreciate the traditions countries have regarding diet; however, I believe the animals should be treated properly before being slaughtered. This is why I strongly support the Animal Protection Law the Korean National Assembly passed in May 1991. Other than that, I really enjoyed ready this article. Podberscek does a great job of juxtaposing those who are for and against the consumption of dog meat. It allows the reader to see the different view points people from western regions have compared to those of the South Korean people.

Good choice but the entry is 773 words-- 50% longer than the assignment specified.