

The novel SARS-CoV-2 (coronavirus) strain that has caused the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic likely reached humans from bats through an unknown intermediary host, which some researchers have attributed to the pangolin. It is widely accepted that the sources of 70-75% of emerging infectious human diseases can be traced to interactions with animals.

Reports have suggested that the earliest cases of coronavirus (December 8, 2019) may be traced to bats sold at a seafood and animal "wet market" in Wuhan, China, where living animals, along with fresh meat, are sold for food. Following the outbreak, the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market was shut down on January 1, 2020. The Chinese government subsequently permanently banned the sale of wild animal products at wet markets, though now that the coronavirus infection rate has flattened in China, reports have surfaced that bats, pangolins and dogs again have been found for sale.

Zoonotic viruses—animal viruses capable of being transmitted to humans—have also been found in birds, turtles, frogs, pigs, cattle, and others. The frequency of significant human-acquired zoonoses in the last century has escalated due to deforestation, wildlife trafficking, industrial animal agriculture, and human establishments encroaching on wildlife habitat.

Worldwide the trend has been toward regulating or eliminating living animal sales. In 2010 the California Fish & Game Commission adopted policy to ban import of non-native frogs & turtles (though California still imports some two million living bullfrogs and 400,000 living turtles annually from their habitats). In March 2019 the Centers for Disease Control warned of eight zoonoses, including emerging coronaviruses. In March, Vietnam drafted legislation to ban wildlife trade for consumption. On April 2, Shenzhen, China banned sale of wildlife species, dog & cat meat. And, coincidentally, on April 5 a Bronx Zoo tiger was diagnosed with COVID-19 transmitted to it by a human zookeeper.

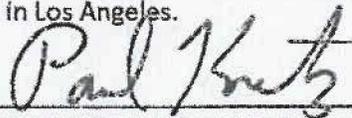
In the United States, the foremost authority on COVID-19, Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, has argued that the current public health crisis is a "direct result of [the wet markets]," stating that "we have so many diseases that emanate out of that unusual human-animal interface, that we [should] just shut it down."

Steven Osofsky, Professor of Wildlife Health and Health Policy at Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine says, "At a time when the entire world is increasingly bearing the costs of the global wildlife trade, where billions of dollars of public health emergency costs and the depletion of the world's wildlife are literally the trade's primary byproducts, it is time to shut down these markets forever..."

Yet here in Los Angeles, markets and other retail outlets continue to sell "living" animals (including salmonella-, chytrid- and other disease-ridden frogs and turtles) for human consumption. The sale (not to be confused with the adoption) of most such living animals already is illegal in many public settings. In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, prudent public health policy, humane treatment of animals and protection of ecosystems suggest that the sale of living animals for human consumption should be prohibited in any setting in Los Angeles.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Attorney be instructed to prepare an ordinance prohibiting the sale of living animals for human consumption in any context in Los Angeles.

PROPOSED BY:


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SECONDED BY:

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