



THE DONKEY SKIN TRADE: AN ANIMAL WELFARE AND HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The global donkey skin trade is a growing animal welfare and humanitarian crisis driven primarily by demand for *ejiao*, a gelatin made by boiling donkey skins. Traditionally used in some forms of traditional Chinese medicine, *ejiao* is now widely marketed as a health, wellness, and beauty product, with claims related to blood health, vitality, immunity, fertility, and anti-aging. It is sold in powders, tonics, tablets, syrups, and increasingly in cosmetics and luxury wellness products.

As demand has grown and become more commercialized, current estimates indicate that between approximately 5 and 6 million donkeys are slaughtered every year to supply the global skin trade. A decade ago, demand was estimated at closer to 4.8 million skins annually. If current trends continue unchecked, the number of donkeys killed each year is expected to rise further, placing immense pressure on the species.

While *ejiao* is the primary driver, donkey skins are also used in gelatin-based supplements, cosmetic products, and some leather goods. There is no biological necessity for donkey skin in any of these products. Gelatin and collagen can be sourced from alternatives, including plant-based and synthetic options, making the continued exploitation of donkeys unnecessary.

In many parts of the world, particularly across Africa, Latin America, and Asia, donkeys are essential to daily life. Donkeys support farming, transport water and goods, and help families earn a living. The donkey skin



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DEMAND IS GROWING

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 **IN 2015: 4.8 million**

 **IN 2025: 5-6 million**

trade has been linked to widespread theft, illegal trafficking, and unregulated slaughter, often with little to no animal welfare oversight. The loss of donkeys has devastating consequences for already vulnerable communities, increasing poverty and insecurity while causing immense suffering to the animals themselves.



Map of donkey skin importers and the top ten exporters. Importing countries are China, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Thailand. Top ten exporters are Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Uruguay, Peru, Nigeria, South Africa and Krygyzstan.

Map sourced from thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk

THE DONKEY SANCTUARY OF CANADA STRONGLY OPPOSES THE DONKEY SKIN TRADE.

We believe donkeys deserve protection, humane treatment, and recognition for their vital role in both human and animal communities. We support education, policy reform, and international collaboration aimed at ending this trade and promoting ethical, sustainable alternatives.

Our commitment is rooted in compassion, respect, and responsibility. We will continue to stand with global partners working toward a future where donkeys are valued for their lives and not exploited for their skins.

ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF GELATIN

Seaweed (carrageenan)
Fruit pectin
Plant starches
Fermentation-derived collagen

