

Executive Director Dr. John Sessa Opens Up About Creating a Better World for Dogs Through The Vanderpump Dog Foundation & Rescue Center



Interview by [Lori Bizzoco](#). Written by [Karley Kemble](#).

Since its inception in 2016, The Vanderpump Dog Foundation has worked tirelessly on its founding mission to create a better and more humane world for dogs. After learning about the mass abuse of dogs at China's annual Lychee and Dog Meat Festival in Yulin, [celebrity couple](#) and reality TV stars Lisa Vanderpump and husband Ken Todd were inspired to create their organization, along with Executive Director Dr. John Sessa. More recently, the power duo hopes to continue spreading their message to people worldwide with their new documentary, *The Road to Yulin and Beyond*, which is Dr. Sessa's directorial, writing, and producing debut.

In our exclusive [celebrity interview](#), we talk with Dr. Sessa about the award-winning documentary, how the Foundation has helped stop animal cruelty in Yulin, and how you can help out.

Exclusive Celebrity Interview: The Vanderpump Dog Foundation



Though the Dog Meat Festival in Yulin shows mass animal abuse and cruelty, it is just one “example of the torture that many dogs in Asia face,” Dr. Sessa explains. “The cruelty varies, and the methods of cruelty change as well, but the underlying torture for consumption is the same.” In fact, 30 percent of the Chinese population still consume dog meat, and unfortunately, the percentage is about the same throughout the rest of Asia.

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The Vanderpump Dog Foundation has played a direct role in saving many of the dogs who fall victim to the cruelty in Yulin. Last year, Dr. Sessa says they surrounded trucks that were illegally carrying dogs to their slaughter. Since a harrowing 80 percent of the dog meat trade in China comes from stolen pets, the Foundation worked with local police to enact a law that requires origin certificates for every animal that is transported. Because the animals were stolen and no certificates were on hand, the animals were seized and passed into the care of trusty local medical triages. They then tried to reunite them with their owners or find new forever homes. “This is the only way we have found that does not perpetuate the trade,” Dr. Sessa explains. “The dog traders are fined, and their inventory is taken away from them.”

The Road to Yulin and Beyond documentary gives audiences an accessible look into the harsh realities of Yulin, highlighting the Foundation's travels to China, rescue missions, visits to slaughterhouses, and legislative lobbying. Ultimately, it gives an overarching review of what the Foundation has done to stop the dog meat trade. After its premiere at the L.A. Awareness Film Festival in 2017, the documentary snagged the Audience Choice Award. Dr. Sessa says that they hope to eventually host a showing for U.S. Congress and are discussing avenues of global distribution in order to make the most impact and reach the most people.



The Foundation is also gearing up for their third annual World Dog Day fundraiser, coming up this June. "The summer date serves as a juxtaposition of the Yulin Dog Meat Festival," adds John Blizzard, PR and Events Coordinator for the Foundation. "We try to have it during the same time period so we can show the world what a 'real' dog festival looks like."

Locally, The Vanderpump Dog Foundation recently launched The Vanderpump Dog Rescue Center and hopes their mission will continue to make an impact in many dogs' lives in California and beyond. In the first year of operation, the center adopted out nearly 500 dogs, and they're hoping to increase this number in 2018.

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Though The Vanderpump Dog Foundation has taken huge steps in creating a better world for dogs, they know their reach will have an even greater impact when people enact change on local levels. If others want to start their own fundraiser with friends and family, they can visit [The Vanderpump Dogs Classy Fundraising Page](#), where they can set up individual campaigns. They can also follow the Foundation on social media – @VanderpumpDogs on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) – for the latest updates and ways to help take action.

No matter where in the world The Vanderpump Dog Foundation may be – whether in China, Los Angeles, or Washington D.C. – Dr. Sessa knows one thing to be true: “We will always continue our four spheres of advocacy: grassroots, education, awareness, and legislation.”

For more information about The Vanderpump Dog Foundation, check out their [website](#).