

Public knows little about wildlife: Survey

Are sparrows, frogs, tortoises and snakes wild animals that should be spared from your dinner table? Only 57.5 percent of [Shanghai](#)ese said "Yes", and 83 percent admitted having eaten them.

A recent survey in the eastern commercial hub showed its citizens knew little about wildlife and its protection, and nearly a half of teenagers had never even heard of the country's 15-year-old law on the protection of wild animals.

The survey was carried out by the Public Health Institute of the Shanghai No. 2 Medical Sciences University, following health experts' assumption that severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which broke out in China in the spring, could have originated in wildlife.

Of the 400 Shanghaiense surveyed, 60 percent said they would never eat a wild animal, while 22.5 percent said they would remain avid epicureans and 17.5 percent were uncertain.

Only 1.9 percent of the 240 respondents who swore to stay away from wildlife dishes admitted that it was because "animals are friends to human beings and should be well protected", while the absolute majority were putting down their chopsticks for fear of catching diseases or breaking the law.

Of the 22.5 percent of affirmed wildlife eaters, 30.2 percent said wild animals were "nutritious and delicious", 60.4 percent were eager to try new tastes and 9.4 percent were just following others.

High earners were eating more wild animals, as the survey found nearly 100 percent of those with a monthly income of over 5,000 yuan (US\$600) admitted having eaten wild animals, as against the 77.63 percent of those earning less than 1,000 yuan (US\$120).

Although there was no direct evidence that the SARS virus came from wild animals, the genetic identities of the corona virus detected in the wild were very similar to what had been found to trigger SARS.

On April 29, the Chinese State Forestry Administration and the State Administration for Industry and Commerce announced jointly a ban on the hunting and sale of wildlife and called for all-round monitoring and control of wildlife breeding and training centers.

The China Wildlife Conservation Association also wrote a letter appealing to the public to stop eating wild animals.