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Note to Animal Welfare Unit Offers to Buy Dogs for Food

■ An Oswego County organization gets a letter offering to pay 10 cents a pound for the animals.

By **MARY JO HILL**
The Post-Standard

OSWEGO — The letter is sure to shock dog lovers, and it left Juanita Grady of the Oswego County Animal Welfare League reeling.

A New York City company wrote to offer 10 cents a pound to buy dogs that would be processed for food, according to the letter from Kea So Joo Inc., that Grady said she received last week.

Dog meat is good medicine and improves sex, according to the letter.

The letter, written in broken English, states, "We cook dog in America. We can dog in America and sell some dog in America in Asian market place.... Most dog we ship oversea."

"I thought it was a sick joke," said Grady, whose non-profit or-

ganization doesn't have an animal shelter.

Then Grady dialed the phone number on the letterhead, gave a fake name and address, and asked if the company picks up dogs from Syracuse, she said. A man told her it picks up dogs every night in Syracuse, she said.

Grady is concerned that large dogs missing from Oswego County might have fallen prey to the company, she said.

Two phone messages from a reporter left Monday on an answering machine at the phone number were not returned. A dog barks in the background on the answering machine's outgoing message, as a voice speaks in English and another language.

A state agency and two animal protection groups are investigating the company, trying to determine whether it is a real business.

It is illegal for animal shelters to sell dogs for food, said Mary Ann Waters, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Agriculture

and Markets.

Humane societies, pounds, shelters and other groups cannot release a dog or cat unless the animal is being adopted, or its owner is picking it up, according to state Agriculture and Markets Law. Animals can also be euthanized by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals or similar societies, according to the law.

Hundreds of calls about the letter have been pouring in to The Humane Society of the United States, said Rachel Lamb, the society's director of companion animal care.

"We would not be surprised if it's a hoax," said Lamb, who added that the society is still taking the letter seriously.

The letter's pidgin English also offended Joan Paylo, a spokeswoman for New York City's ASPCA. She noted that the letter is punctuated correctly and not a word is misspelled.

Her organization is hoping that the letter is a joke, Paylo said.

Distressed people from Maine to California started calling the ASPCA in New York City last week about the company, Paylo said.

The address on the letterhead is a mailbox drop, and the company's name is supposedly Korean, Paylo said.

Ju Yong An, 21, whose father owns the Oriental House grocery store in Syracuse, said a small percentage of Koreans do eat dog meat. Dog meat is believed to be a good source of energy, she said.

The Oriental House does not sell dog meat, and An has never eaten it, she said.

An, who came to the United States from Korea six years ago, said she shares the American view that dogs shouldn't be eaten.

Americans are used to dogs as companions or workers, such as police dogs, Grady said. This attitude makes the idea of eating a dog horrifying, she said.

"They're like a member of the family," Grady said.