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Animal Rights Groups Call for Change in Korean Summer Tradition Amid Chicken Welfare Concerns

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On July 15, the first of South Korea's three hottest days of summer, animal rights organizations voiced concerns over the treatment of chickens used in samgyetang, a popular chicken soup traditionally consumed on these days. (Image courtesy of Yonhap)

SEOUL, Jul. 16 (Korea Bizwire) – On July 15, the first of South Korea's three hottest days of summer, animal rights organizations voiced concerns over the treatment of chickens used in samgyetang, a popular chicken soup traditionally consumed on these days.

The groups argue that the recent ban on dog meat consumption does not go far enough in addressing animal welfare issues associated with summer customs.

At a gathering in front of Bosingak Pavilion in Seoul, representatives from organizations including Animal Liberation Wave criticized the shift from dog meat to chicken consumption.

“While the special law to end dog meat consumption has passed, this alone does not make our country’s summer traditions ethical,” a spokesperson stated. “As samgyetang replaces dog meat soup, we’re witnessing increased exploitation and slaughter of chickens.”

Data from the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency reveals the scale of this issue. While the monthly average of chickens slaughtered for samgyetang is 14.83 million, this number nearly doubles to 29.22 million in July, when the hottest days occur.

The organizations describe dire conditions for these chickens, claiming they are “forced to consume high-protein feed in cramped environments without distinction between day and night. Those that don’t gain weight quickly or fall ill often die painfully with twisted necks.”

From March to June, the groups conducted investigations at three contract farms supplying major poultry companies. One farm reportedly had ammonia gas levels of 99ppm on its floors, nearly four times the 25ppm limit set by animal protection laws.

Large infestations of lesser mealworms, known to cause bacterial infections, were also discovered.

“The practice of ‘high-density farming’ in most poultry farms is the root cause accelerating animal epidemics,” the groups stated, calling for an end to such systems.

The organizations challenged the traditional belief that consuming animals improves human health, labeling it as outdated. They urged for a cultural shift towards “ethical summer traditions without animal slaughter.”

Lina Jang (linajang@koreabizwire.com)