

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 18, 2015

The Hon R. Gil Kerlikowske
Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Commissioner Kerlikowske,

We write to express concern regarding China's dog-leather industry and mislabeled products ending up on U.S. store shelves. Fifteen years after the United States banned the importation of dog fur and skin, evidence has surfaced that some Chinese manufacturers are surreptitiously substituting canine leather for cow or pig leather and then illegally exporting the products to the United States. Last year an investigation revealed a graphic undercover video of a Chinese dog-leather processing plant; employees at the plant confirmed at the time that the dog-leather products were bound for the U.S. market.

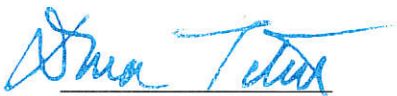
In American culture, dogs are cherished pets and are considered a member of the family. Our laws reflect this status by prohibiting the consumption of dogs and killing dogs for the purpose of making products out of their body parts; and there are strict penalties for torture and abuse. Accordingly, Americans would not want to hold their four-legged companion's leash with a dog-skin glove.

Chinese manufacturers do not ignore U.S. laws; they purposefully pierce them. These Chinese manufacturers rely heavily on two things to pass off dog-leather as cow or pig leather: (1) The visual similarity in leathers makes it nearly impossible for American consumers to ascertain the animal-base of the goods they purchase, leaving the consumer to rely on proper labelling of products; and (2) U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers do not investigate the composition of leather products entering the country to determine whether the manufacturer has correctly labeled the animal-base.

We would appreciate learning from you what, if anything, CBP has done to address this matter and what additional steps we can take to prevent such goods from being sold to unwitting American merchants and customers. For example, would CBP conduct random samplings to determine species of origin of imported leather products?

Thank you for the opportunity to bring this consumer protection matter to your attention.

Sincerely,



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress