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Congress of the United States
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December 10, 2015

The Honorable R. Gil Kerlikowske
Commissioner
Customs and Border Protection (CBP)
1300 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Commissioner Kerlikowske,

Thank you for your committed efforts to ensure the security of the United States while also facilitating safe and lawful international trade and travel.

As you know, in 2000, the United States instituted a ban on the importation of dog fur and skin. However, recent media reports indicate a possibility that some goods manufactured in China may contain either dog leather or dog fur. Since it is difficult for consumers to identify the difference, some manufacturers simply label the products as being from cows or pigs.

On March 4, 2015, Time Magazine reported on this problem, stating that:

“Dog leather, which is cheaper to produce than material from cows or sheep, can be made into gloves, coat trims and other accessories, and is exported all over the globe.”

Many American consumers are understandably distressed at the thought that the gloves they purchase from Chinese manufacturers may be constructed in whole or in part from dogs. There is no indication on these products' labels indicating the product contains dog hide. Thus, American consumers are unaware of this potential issue with goods they are unwittingly buying.

The most recent and complete investigative report of this problem was performed in 2014. The findings of that investigation, which was conducted by a U.S. based non-profit, included graphic video footage of Chinese dog leather processing plants and included clear statements from participants that these products were later being sent to the U.S. markets.

Given the wide range of CBP's investigative tools, I would be interested to know what your agency has done in regards to this issue. I would also like to know what, if anything, is needed from Congress in

order to ensure that Americans are protected from unwittingly purchasing goods that contain this illegally-sourced leather. Lastly, if this is not already being done, I would be interested in learning whether you feel it would be appropriate to engage CBP's full-service analytical laboratories so that they can randomly sample a small number of Chinese leather imports to determine the species of origin for these products being sold to Americans. By doing so, CBP would help ensure our laws regarding importation of products made from dogs are not being violated by Chinese companies.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response and to working with you in the future to ensure our nation's standards are being maintained.

Sincerely,



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress