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Dogs for dinner shock the Swiss

THE usually well-ordered and hygienic Swiss have been shaken by revelations that dogs and cats form a regular part of the diet of some of their compatriots.

The practice, said to be "widespread", is centred around the eastern cantons of St Gallen, Appenzell and Thurgovie, but some believe it could be prevalent throughout the French-speaking regions.

According to Inspector Jean Clerment of the Fribourg Society for the Protection of Animals, these curious culinary preferences began in the 1950s, during a particularly hard winter, when people turned to dog meat in desperation. They developed a taste for the meat and have now diversified to other pets.

"It has not died out. There are still lots of people who eat dogs – and cats as well," he says.

The eating of dogs and cats is not against the law, but trading in the animals is forbidden. Nevertheless, farmers at Lagnau in the Emmental region are known to supply the animals. "You cannot go to a normal butcher's," Clerment says. "But

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there are private people, often peasant farmers, who will do the butchering for you."

The canton of Appenzell is well-known for its sheepdog breed, which is black and white and slightly smaller than a St Bernard. It is this unfortunate animal which is top of the menu for the locals. The revelations first emerged in a programme on RTL, the Swiss-German language television channel. It had been alerted by a woman disgusted by the culinary habits of her neighbours.

Thanks to the uproar, locals may now be deprived of favourite delicacies such as canine salami, feline goulash and lightly smoked dog.

The Paris-based animal rights' group, the Brigitte Bardot Foundation, has vowed to stamp out this "worse than beastly" practice. "We are gathering in information right now," a spokesman told *The European*. "The foundation will be intervening."