

Trump pushes false claims about migrants eating dogs in Springfield, Ohio

On the debate stage Tuesday, Donald Trump doubled down on baseless and dehumanizing claims pushed by his running mate that immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, are stealing and eating pets.

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By Amy B Wang and Mariana Alfaro

Former president Donald Trump on Tuesday doubled down on a false and dehumanizing claim — pushed by his running mate and some Republicans — that immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, who came into the country during the Biden-Harris administration are injuring and eating Americans' pets.

"In Springfield, they're eating the dogs. The people that came in, they're eating the cats. They're eating — they're eating the pets of the people that live there," Trump said at the [ABC News debate](#) between him and Vice President Kamala Harris. "And this is what's happening in our country. And it's a shame."

When moderator David Muir pushed back, saying that the city manager of Springfield has said there were no credible reports of such claims, Trump refused to concede.

"I've seen people on television ... the people on television claimed my dog was taken and used for food," Trump said, interrupting Muir. "So maybe he said that, and maybe that's a good thing to say for a city manager."

The escalation of the [baseless and bizarre](#) assertion came a day after Sen. [JD Vance](#) (R-Ohio), Trump's running mate, shared a post on X in which he cited unnamed "reports" claiming that people in the town west of Columbus "have had their pets abducted and eaten by people who shouldn't be in this country." Before the debate Tuesday, Trump also posted on his social media platform AI-generated [images](#) of himself with various animals, seemingly a reference to the Springfield claim.



Former president Donald Trump participates in the debate against Vice President Kamala Harris on Tuesday in Philadelphia. (Demetrius Freeman/The Washington Post)

Vance, who has long claimed that immigrants are draining resources in towns such as Springfield, was promoting the baseless suggestion in what appeared to be an effort to attack Harris. Police in Springfield [told local news outlets](#) that there are no reports of pets being stolen or eaten in the city.

Asked Tuesday about the unsubstantiated reports Vance had pushed, White House national security spokesman John Kirby called it "dangerous" misinformation.

"Because there will be people that believe it, no matter how ludicrous and stupid it is. And they might act on that kind of misinformation, and act on it in a way where somebody can get hurt, so it needs to stop," Kirby said.

Leslie Voltaire, a member of Haiti's transitional presidential council, called the claims "not only completely unfounded but also unacceptable."

"The continued misrepresentation of Haitian immigrants is deeply troubling and concerning. ... This rhetoric unfairly targets a community that has always contributed significantly to American society through hard work," Voltaire [wrote](#) in an X post Wednesday. "Such narratives risk dividing and endangering already vulnerable communities. It's crucial to promote unity, mutual respect, and the longstanding historic partnership between the United States and Haiti."

Asked to cite the evidence that Trump said he saw, a Trump campaign representative ignored the question and instead emailed a general statement from Trump advisers Chris LaCivita and Susie Wiles saying that the former president was "the clear winner" of the debate Tuesday. The statement did not include mention of Trump's false claims that migrants were eating pets in Ohio.

Vance's sentiment Monday attacking Harris and demonizing immigrants in Springfield was quickly echoed by the Trump campaign and other Republicans in Congress, including Sen. Ted Cruz (Tex.). In a news release, the Trump campaign said residents of Springfield have "been left in terror as migrants overtake the once-quiet city" and that migrants were "dumped" in the city "unvetted" because of the Biden-Harris administration's policies.

While Vance and the Trump campaign appeared to suggest that Haitian immigrants in Springfield arrived illegally and without proper vetting, the growing population of Haitian immigrants there live and work in the United States legally, according to an [FAQ](#) put together by the city of Springfield. Per the document, Haitian immigrants in Springfield arrived under the Immigration Parole Program and were allowed to apply for temporary protected status, an authorization that gives them the ability to work legally in the United States. To receive such status, [immigrants must maintain a clean crime record.](#)

In the post-debate spin room in Philadelphia on Tuesday night, Vance also doubled down on his claims, [telling NBC News reporter Yamiche Alcindor](#) — who is Haitian American — that “no one has spread false claims” and suggesting that Springfield city officials were not “fully in touch with what’s going on on the ground there.”

Vance also appeared to dismiss Alcindor’s question about Haitian immigrants’ concerns that spreading such false claims could put their lives at risk.

“What do I think is a bigger problem? Insulting 20,000 people or the fact that my constituents can’t live a good life because Kamala Harris opened the border?” Vance said before walking away.

The baseless notion that immigrants are hurting animals in Springfield [appears to come](#) from a viral post first shared in a Springfield Facebook group in which a user claimed that a friend of their neighbor’s daughter had found her lost cat hanging from a branch at a home where a Haitian neighbor lives.

The user then claimed, without evidence, that “Rangers & police” had told them that Haitian neighbors had also been hanging ducks and geese for butchering. [Per the Springfield News-Sun](#), Springfield police said Monday that they are aware of the social media posts but that there was no evidence of such claims and that the issue is “not something that’s on our radar right now.”

But the police statement did not stop Republicans from amplifying Vance and the Trump campaign’s messaging against Harris and immigrants. The Trump campaign, in its news release, cited a Daily Mail story covering the Facebook user’s baseless claims. And in a post shared on [X](#), the Trump War Room said Trump, if elected, “will deport migrants who eat pets. Kamala Harris will send them to your town next. Make your choice, America.”

Cruz on X shared an image of two cats hugging each other with overlaid text reading: “Please vote for Trump so Haitian immigrants don’t eat us.” Rep. Wesley Hunt (R-Tex.) shared a video on X that contained AI-generated footage of Trump kissing a duck and knitting next to a cat.

“We cannot allow our pets to become a hot lunch for Kamala’s newcomers,” Hunt said in his post. “This November, you can do your part. Protect the Animals. Vote Trump.”

Karen DeYoung contributed to this report.

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