

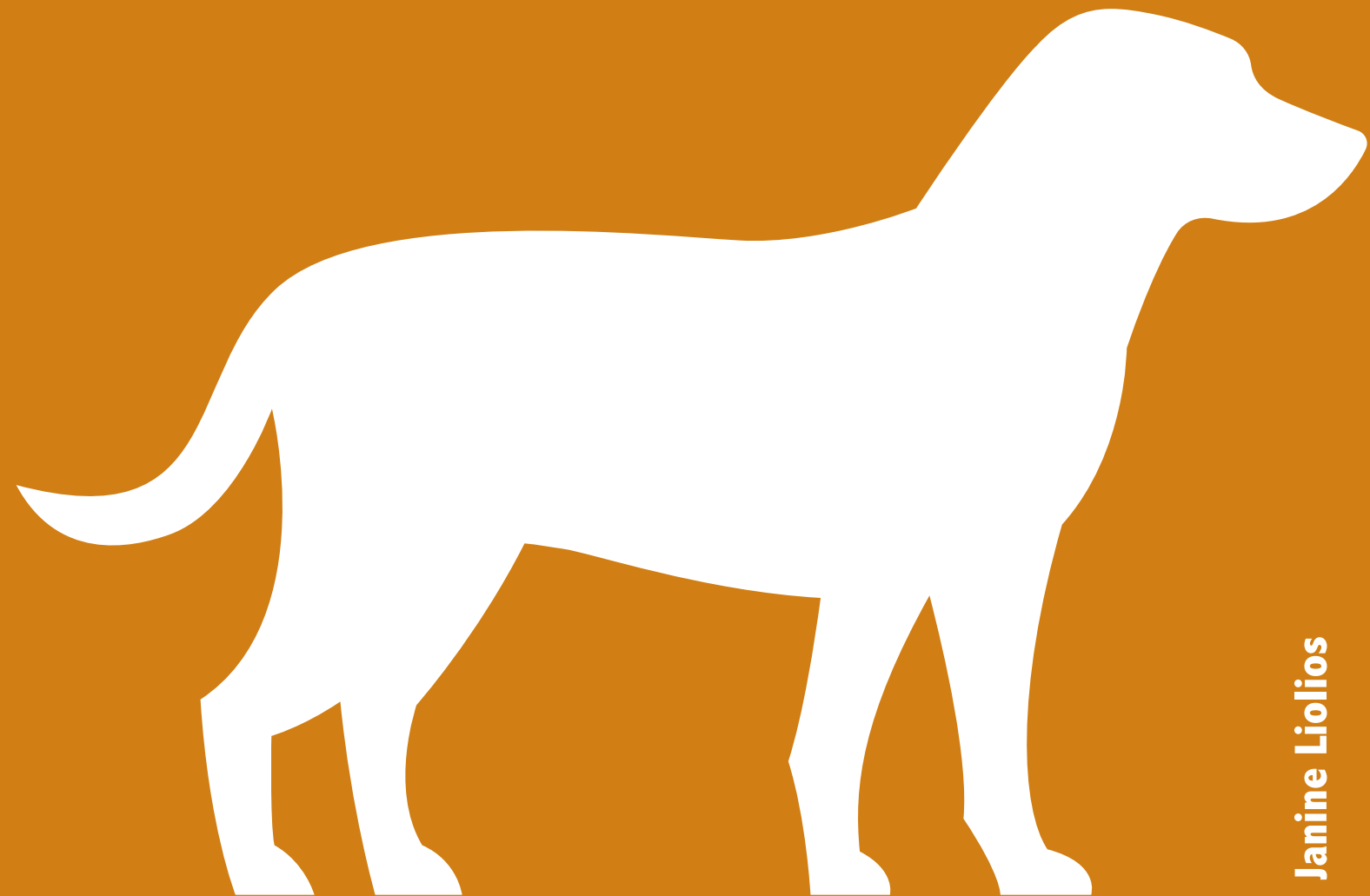
# Tourism

# Master Dissertation

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The management of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes, Greece:  
a multi stakeholder approach

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**“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress  
can be judged by the way its animals are treated”  
- Mahatma Gandhi**

# Tourism Master Dissertation

The management of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes, Greece: a multi-stakeholder approach

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**Place and date** Eindhoven, 8 December 2017

"I hereby declare that this dissertation is wholly the work of: *Janine Liolios*. Any other contributors or sources have either been referenced in the prescribed manner or are listed in the acknowledgements together with the nature and the scope of their contribution."

# Preface and Acknowledgements

In order to fulfil the graduation requirements of the Master Tourism Destination Management, I hereby provide you my dissertation about the management of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes, Greece.

It is with great inspiration and gratitude that I look back on the past Master year, in which I have been able to develop myself, not only academically, but also personally.

Especially the field work in Asia-Pacific has taught me valuable lessons about tourism destination management in practice. Then, it was also during this time that I came across many free-roaming dogs and decided to devote my master dissertation to (the management of) these animals.

However, to those who know me well it may be no surprise, as since I was a child I have always been passionate about dogs. Additionally, being half Greek myself, the choice for a destination to carry out my research was quickly made.

Hence, it was with great enthusiasm and ambition that I started this research project. After more than five months of hard work, I can look back on an intensive period, where I have managed to develop my competences as a 'destination manager' even more.

Of course, I would not have been able to conduct this research without any help and therefore I would firstly like to thank my supervisor Mr.

Boland for the excellent guidance and support he has given me throughout my graduation period.

Moreover, I also wish to thank all the respondents who have cooperated, as without their input I would not have been able to carry out this study.

Especially the animal welfare organisations R.A.W.S., Stray Gang and Paws & Claws, who took time out of their busy schedules to pick me up and give me a tour around their shelters, while answering all of my questions.

In addition, my parents deserve a particular note of thanks: If I ever lost interest, you always kept me motivated. And last but not least, where would I be without my own dog at home, who always kept me company while writing, and sometimes struggling with, the contents of this thesis.

I genuinely hope my dissertation has provided new insights into (the management of) free-roaming dogs in relation to the tourism industry and that in the future all dogs in Rhodes will be happy and healthy and tourists will continue to visit this wonderful place, with good memories only.

I hope you enjoy your reading.

*Janine Liolios*

*Eindhoven, 8 December, 2017*



# Executive summary

In recent years, there has been a growing concern for animal welfare, which has led its way into the tourism industry as well. Nonetheless, the focus has always been laid on the impact of tourism on wildlife and little exploration has been made about the influence domestic animals like free-roaming dogs could have on tourist experiences.

However, if not used to the sight of free-roaming dogs, it is possible that as mismatch between tourist attitudes and those of the holiday destination may occur. Consequently, this mismatch could have a significant effect on the tourism industry of a destination.

Especially since the economic crisis hit the popular holiday destination Greece, stray dogs have been an emerging issue here, with numbers rising to a million.

A previous study of Mannhart et al. (2007) made an attempt to assess the situation of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes, Greece but was unable to obtain long term results. Consequently, this research will further explore the situation of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes, and how they should be managed, while simultaneously adding the relation to its tourism industry.

In order to get a full understanding, a multi-stakeholder framework will be drawn, exploring the roles and attitudes of: locals, tourists, tourism businesses, the government, veterinarians and animal welfare organisations on the island. One of the goals hereby was to create an own stakeholder network.

Hence, the aim of this research is to:

*Improve the understanding of the situation of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes and the roles and attitudes of the different stakeholders in order to identify strategies, embedded in the political, economical and cultural context, to manage free-roaming dogs.*

Thus, throughout this dissertation the following research questions will be answered:

1. What is the current situation when it comes to free-roaming dogs in Rhodes?
2. What are the roles and attitudes of the different stakeholder groups?
3. How can the free-roaming dogs best be managed in Rhodes?

In order to answer these questions, both secondary and primary research was conducted.

Preparatory to the field research in Rhodes, desk research was used to shape the theoretical foundations of this dissertation, shown in the literature review.

Subsequently, field research has been carried out in Rhodes for a period of three consecutive weeks.

Coming from an interpretative research philosophy and the aim to gain *understanding*, the focus has been laid on using qualitative research methods. However, in order to collect all relevant data also quantitative methods were used, hence resulting in a multiple methods approach.

Firstly, the observation method gave quantitative and qualitative insight into the current situation of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes. This technique enabled the researcher to count and map the free-roaming dogs in Rhodes Town and assess their welfare based on given indicators, including observed human-dog interactions.

Secondly, semi-structured interviews with all relevant actors directly connected to the free-roaming dogs gave more detailed insight into the roles and attitudes of the different stakeholders involved. Because the management of free-roaming dogs is not a simple formula, the derived data was used in order to shape a second round of interviews in the Netherlands, with experts from the field of dog management. Hence, in this case the existing data could be 'checked' and more detailed information could be collected about possible solutions.

Lastly, as not many tourists were observed interacting with the dogs and this certainly did not lead to in-depth interviews, an attempt was made to fill this knowledge-gap by a content analysis of reviews on TripAdvisor.

Moreover, semantic analysis made it possible to assign *meaning* to the content in order to define whether the reviews had a positive or negative connotation regarding free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

All data was analysed based on either expert guidelines or existing theories.

Findings showed that the dogs in Rhodes Town can be classified as 'community dogs', being well-fed, not aggressive, generally 'healthy' and not shy of humans. However, a distinction could be made when it comes to the welfare of the free-roaming outside of this area, and especially in rural areas many dogs suffer from malnutrition, diseases, injuries and/or parasites.

Besides threats to their own welfare, free-roaming dogs in Rhodes are associated with safety and health issues for the public, livestock predation and nuisance through noise and fouling. In a tourism context, findings showed that tourism businesses and tourists also experience nuisance by means of begging behaviour and dogs barking during the night. However, as tourist numbers are not declining, conclusions could be drawn that free-roaming dogs do not have a direct impact on the economy of Rhodes. Nonetheless, online sentiment confirmed that for tourists coming across emaciated and sick dogs it can have a negative impact on their holiday, consequently affecting the destination image as well.

The number one source of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes has been identified as 'irresponsible dog ownership'. Besides, the economic crisis has been indicated as an extra trigger that causes dog owners in Rhodes to abandon their dog when they cannot take care of them anymore or to refuse to neuter, vaccinate or micro-chip their pet. Moreover, results showed dogs have a different purpose in Greece than solely companionship, and they are often 'used' for guarding premises or livestock, or to take for hunting, thus adding the role of hunters and shepherds. Additionally, the human-dog relationship in Rhodes is shaped by the mentality that dogs are 'dirty' or 'scary', which is especially prevalent amongst the older generation. Therefore, all respondents settled their hope on the 'new generation', which is indeed beginning to show more affection for the canine race.

In fact, irresponsible dog ownership seems to be going hand in hand with the role of the vets, as it came to show that some veterinarians fail to properly register the dogs in the database, continue to lobby for high fees and boycott volunteer vets that are coming to neuter the animals.

Also the local authorities in Rhodes have not been able to stimulate responsible ownership as currently laws are not adequately enforced and punishments are often withdrawn due to 'eased circumstances'.

Therefore, there is a general feeling among the animal welfare organisations that the government 'does not care' and they are the only ones working towards a solution by sheltering and supporting the treatment and re-homing of countless dogs every year.

Moreover, lack of organization and communication is making it more difficult for the organisations to work together, as well as with tourism businesses who claim wanting to help.

Especially businesses that offer food experience nuisance from the dogs and as there is no general policy what to do when an issue with a free-roaming dog occurs, all tourism businesses are handling it according to their own perception of animal welfare. As a result, occasionally these animals get poisoned or harmed.

Moreover, results showed that also tourists can get confused, and mismatches in perception occasionally lead to dilemmas. However, in general the conclusion could be drawn that as long as the dogs are healthy and (look) cared for, most tourists seem to welcome the strays. On top of that, sometimes tourists fulfil a valuable role by donating or volunteering at the shelter or even by adopting a dog from Rhodes.

In order to come to a solution, all relevant stakeholders should come together in a working group in order to establish a dog management program.

Components of a local dog management program were defined as: policy and legislation; education; animal control officers; a regional dog register; reproduction control and stimulating adoptions.

In order to convince politicians about the importance of such a program, it is advised for the animal welfare organisations to carry out an advocacy campaign as well as to provide an academic basis with the help of a university. Moreover, education should not only be given in schools, but also veterinarians should take the responsibility to inform their clients about responsible dog ownership, as well as pet shops and other points where dogs are 'purchased', in order to reduce the risk of abandonment.

Additionally, tourism businesses should inform their clients about what (not) to do when coming across a roaming canine and communication and collaboration between the animal welfare organisations and tourism businesses who indicate wanting to help should be improved.

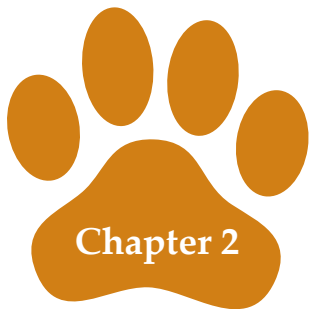
Lastly, future research is recommended to fill information gaps and provide a basis for its realisation.

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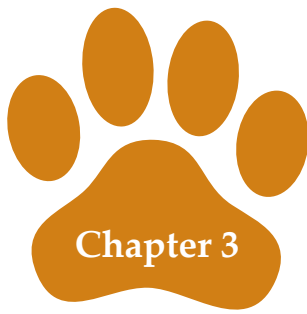
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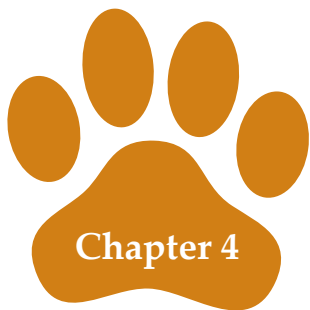
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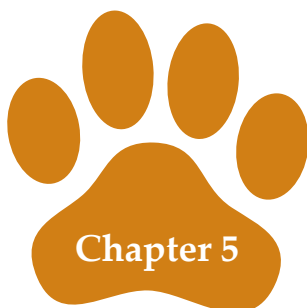
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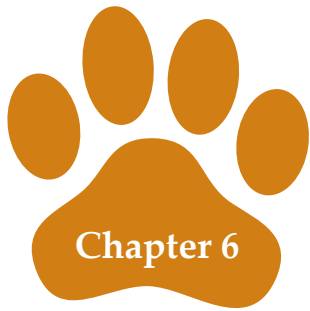


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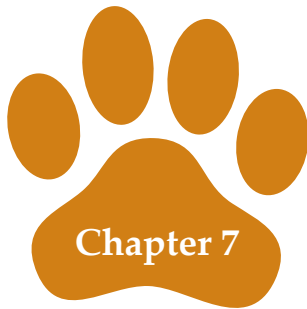


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# List of abbreviations

ARNGO	Animal Welfare NGOs
CNVR	Catch Neuter Vaccinate Release (program)
FAO	The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ICAM	The International Companion Animal Management Coalition
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OIE	The World Organisation for Animal Health
R.A.W.S.	Rhodes Animal Welfare Society
TNR	Trap Neuter Release (program)
WAP	World Animal Protection (former known as WSPA)
WSPA	World Society for the Protection of Animals





# Chapter 1

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This chapter will introduce the topic of this research and explain its relevance. Moreover, a research design will be drawn as well as a conceptual model which represents the main focus of this study. The chapter will end with a chapter breakdown of the dissertation.

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# Introduction

This research will examine the effect of free-roaming dogs on tourism in Rhodes, Greece and how they should be managed. It will investigate whether stray dogs are a problem and their effect on different stakeholder groups. These stakeholders include: locals, tourists, private tourism businesses (e.g. restaurants or hotels) the government, veterinarians and animal welfare organisations on the island. In order to get a full understanding, a multi-stakeholder framework will be drawn, which eventually will lead to future recommendations and a discussion for this topic.

## 1.1 Research motivation

In the last years, there is growing concern for animal welfare, which has led its way into the tourism industry as well (Reynolds and Braithwaite, 2001). The trend that animal-friendly vacations are gaining importance is no assumption, as nowadays many international NGOs are leading the way to promoting responsible and animal-friendly tourism. Examples include: a Responsible Tourism guide for tourists (FAADA, 2013); an online form to report animal cruelty at vacation spots (WAP, 2013); a guide for ethical animal tourism (SPANNA, 2012) and the current campaign of World Animal Protection (2017) called 'Wildlife not entertainers', which already convinced over 170 travel companies worldwide to stop selling elephant rides.

Yet, the main focus in the literature has been laid on the impact of tourism on animals and their ecology (e.g. Christiansen et al., 2010; Ventre and Jett, 2015; Muyambi, 2005; INTOSAI, 2013; Green and Higginbottom, 2001) and not much attention has been paid to the effect animals might have on tourists and the tourism industry in general. However, as Markwell (2015, p. 5) argues: "appropriate management of tourist-animal interactions depends not just on understanding the effects of tourism on the animal species but also, just as critically, understanding the human dimension of those interactions".

Even though in the last few decades social scientists have made an attempt to examine the experiences of tourists encountering animals, most of this literature has focused on wildlife-based tourism (Markwell, 2015).

To date, little exploration has been made regarding domestic animals like dogs, other than seeing them as a travel buddy (e.g. Gretzel and Hardy, 2015; Carr and Cohen, 2009; Hung et al., 2012).

However, in a destination where dogs (are allowed to) roam free, also these animals could lead to tourist-animal interactions.

Although some research has been done regarding free-roaming dogs in relation to tourism (e.g. Webster, 2013; Ruiz-Izagirre and Eilers, 2012; Strickland, 2015; Beckman et al., 2014; Plumridge and Fielding, 2003) the focus has been laid on developing countries in Central America, Asia or Africa. However, popular holiday destinations in the South of Europe are home to a great number of free-roaming dogs as well and especially after the economic crisis hit Greece, stray dogs have been an emerging issue here, with numbers rising to a million (BBC, 2015).

In 2007 Mannhart et al. made an attempt to assess the situation of free-roaming dogs (and cats) in Rhodes, Greece. However, due to conflicts with local veterinarians the researchers were unable to obtain long-term results.

Therefore, and given the fact that it is an island, this research makes an attempt to further explore the situation of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes, while simultaneously adding the relation to its tourism industry.

## 1.2 Background analysis

With its 1401 square kilometres, Rhodes is the fourth largest island of Greece and the largest Greek island belonging to the Dodecanese (Greece Travel Secrets).

The island counts 115,000 inhabitants, of whom 50% live in the capital city, which also goes by the names of Rhodes (Mannhart et al., 2007).

Rhodes is one of the most developed and popular tourist destinations in the Mediterranean and attracts many tourists every year, arriving with charter flights, cruise ships and private yachts (visitrhodes.gr). In 2016, the majority of 76,6% of airport arrivals was from Western origin, with the UK, Germany and Sweden dominating the top 3 markets (europetravel, 2016).

Not surprisingly, tourism is the primary source of income for Rhodes and in total around 75% of the island's economy is depended on this industry (visitrhodes.gr).

Image 1.1 | Rhodes island map



\*Derived from rhodestaxitours.com

### 1.3 Problem analysis

An increasing amount of people in the Western world owns pets (Gretzel and Hardy 2015). Because for many tourists expectations about the treatment of dogs will be influenced by personal experiences of their home country, it is possible that a mismatch between tourist attitudes and those of the holiday destination may occur. This mismatch could have a significant effect on the tourism industry of a destination (Beckman et al., 2014). Especially, for countries where tourism is responsible for a significant amount of its gross domestic product, free-roaming dogs can have an indirect impact on its economy (Webster, 2013).

Free-roaming dogs could create a perception of an uncaring society or economic hardship (Webster, 2013) and thus could leave tourists with bad impressions (Plumridge and Fielding, 2003). Additionally, concerns such as dog attacks and rabies could have a further negative effect and prevent tourists from returning to a destination (Webster, 2013).

As a matter of fact, it was only recently (25 September 2017) that a British tourist was believed to have been killed by a pack of stray dogs in Greece (Birchall and Webb, 2017).

Moreover, research from Webster (2013) determined that for many tourists coming across dogs (or cats) that are obviously strays (i.e. starving, sick or suffering) could have a lasting negative impact on a holiday. In addition, it could even lead to some tourists refusing to travel to certain destinations, because they do not want to see these animals suffering or because they have heard that the destination controls stray populations in an inhumane way (Webster, 2013).

Especially notorious are the mass killings of strays that happen frequently when stray populations get unmanageable, but also before tourist season and special events. These happenings are often well documented, like the spotlight PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) put on the Ukrainian government when they had a plan for mass killings of stray cats and dogs before the Euro football championship in 2012 (PETA, 2011).

Also in Greece there has been means of negative publicity, as Athens' preparation for the Olympics in 2004 included massive dog killings, which put the country in a negative spotlight (Harrison, 2004). When this news became apparent, international activists set up a boycott on the Greek tourism industry. As a result, countless online petitions exist, trying to create awareness for 'animal abuse' in Greece and pleading for a boycott of all trade, tourism and merchandise products (e.g. ESDAW; change.org; Greece Exposed; Care2petitions).

Also on TripAdvisor and other travel forums the issue of stray dogs in Greece gets attention, as tourists write things like: "Odd question I know, but I would be eternally grateful for information on greek islands that have/don't have many stray dogs. I am a huge dog lover and when I find myself in places with stray dogs, I spend all the time and money I have trying to help them - all the while, feeling miserable that there isn't more I can do to help..."

*...I know this sounds twisted, but while I spend a lot of my time and money working on this problem while at home, I am hoping to enjoy the trip [...] I just want to enjoy vacation also” (ZeldaBoo, 2005) or “Was considering a trip to Greece but I have heard there are a lot of stray dogs, I am a big animal lover and I find it troubling to come across needy animals. I have been to North Italy, UK, France, Germany and Austria w/no such problem. Are there a lot of dogs in Greece? If so any other country suggestions???” (Toni, 2008).*

The fact that (the perception of) free-roaming dogs also causes issues in Rhodes is confirmed by tourists stating *“I just returned from Rhodes, Greece and there is a stray dog problem” (Nancy, 2009) and “After returning from a week long holiday on the the Greek island of Rhodes, I was appalled at the sheer number of stray dogs and cats. The majority I saw were in a terrible state. Emaciated, starving, injured and begging for scraps of food. I saw many dogs chained to trees and empty barrels with no food, water or shelter from the intense sun (I was informed that these ones are guard dogs but they were always left in wasteland where there was nothing to guard)” (blastbeat78, 2008).*

A solution may lie in the existence of Animal Rescue Organisations, which are NGOs who are dedicated to save these animals and finding a permanent home for them. However, the problem may be too big for these kind of organisations to handle by themselves. As ‘Strays of Greece’ states on their website: *“We get numerous calls and emails from tourists returning from a holiday in Greece when they have been disturbed by the level of animal abuse and they say they will never go back again”*. However, not only tourists are involved in this issue, but also tourism businesses such as restaurants are affected by the stray dogs. During tourist season many strays are being fed by tourists who feel sad, resulting in an abundance of begging animals around each taverna at the popular tourist sites (Strays of Greece, 2015).

Although in the year 2003 a new law was proposed by the Greek Ministry of Agriculture, obligating municipalities to approach the stray problem through internationally acknowledged guidelines, two years later, this law still was not applied in Rhodes, thus lacking the desired and expected success (Mannhart et al., 2007).

Despite a few reviews on TripAdvisor, there is momentarily a huge information gap when it comes to the effect of stray dogs on the tourism industry of the island of Rhodes. Therefore, extensive research is needed in order to analyse this dilemma and to come to solutions which will benefit all stakeholders involved.

### **1.3.1 Aim of the research**

In this case facts and figures are needed as well as insight into the roles and attitudes of the actors involved, in order to contextualise the best approach. Therefore, the aim of this research is to *“improve the understanding of the situation of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes and the roles and attitudes of the different stakeholders in order to identify strategies, embedded in the political, economical and cultural context, to manage free-roaming dogs”*.

## **1.4 Research design**

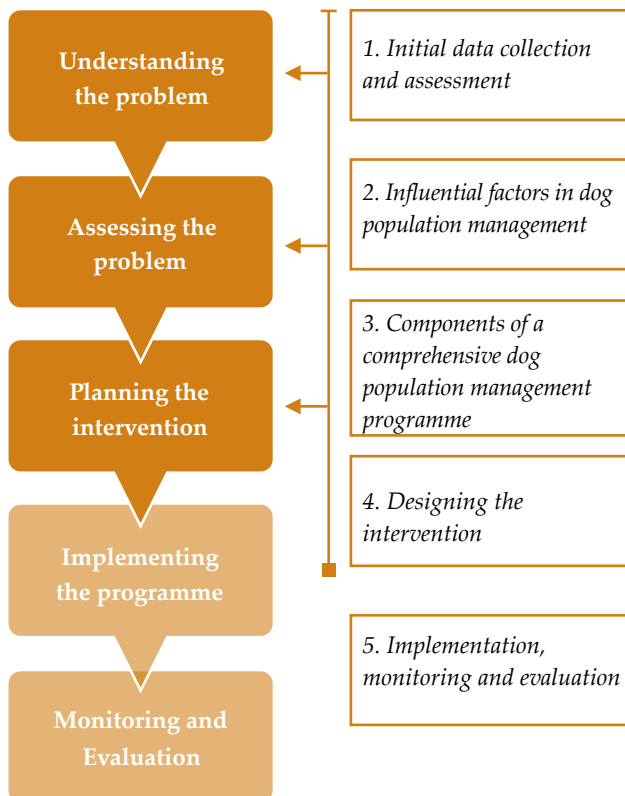
The structure of this thesis research is designed while building on the guidelines of “Humane Dog Population Management Guidance” of the ICAM Coalition (2007) written by representatives of World Animal Protection (WAP, former known as WSPA), the Humane Society International (HSI), the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), the International arm of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA International), the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW), the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) and the Alliance for Rabies Control (ARC) and the report of World Animal Protection (2015) regarding “Humane Dog Management”.

Both guidance documents describe the different steps that must be taken when designing a programme to manage free-roaming dogs. These steps are illustrated in figure 1.1 on the next page.

As the actual implementation and monitoring is not the objective of this study, this thesis research will only address the first three steps according to the guidance of WAP (2015), including: understanding the problem, accessing the problem and planning the intervention. In this case, step 3 and 4 of the guidance of ICAM (2007) are equal to the third step of WAP (2015). These steps will be further explained in the following paragraphs.



Figure 1.1 | Research structure



\*Adapted from *Humane Dog Management* (WAP, 2015) and *Humane Dog Population Management Guidance* (ICAM, 2007)

### 1.4.1 Step 1: Understanding the problem

According to World Animal Protection (2015, p. 22) “the first step in achieving a successful and sustainable programme is clearly stating the specific problem and identifying the affected stakeholders”. The ICAM Coalition (2007) describes this step as an essence to understand the dynamics of the dog population. Both documents stress the importance of focusing on the *local context*.

Throughout this step, the local dog situation must be assessed, with the following aspects to be considered (ICAM, 2007; FAO, 2014):

1. The current size and distribution of the dog population.
2. The main welfare issues faced by these dogs.
3. What problems do the dogs cause?
4. What is the source of new dogs entering into existing dog populations?
5. What is currently being done, both informally and officially, to control the dog population?

In other terms, during the first step the local situation of the free-roaming dogs in Rhodes will be assessed, in order to investigate *what* the problem is and which stakeholders are involved.

### 1.4.2 Step 2: Assessing the problem

According to ICAM (2007) the initial assessment should have generated data and insights into the local situation. The next step is to determine which factors have the greatest impact on the issue.

In other terms, the researcher must look at the *causes* of the problems that were assessed in the previous step (WAP, 2015).

To gain this understanding, the roles and attitudes of the different stakeholder groups will be assessed for the case of Rhodes. This will give (more qualitative) insight into *why* there is a problem.

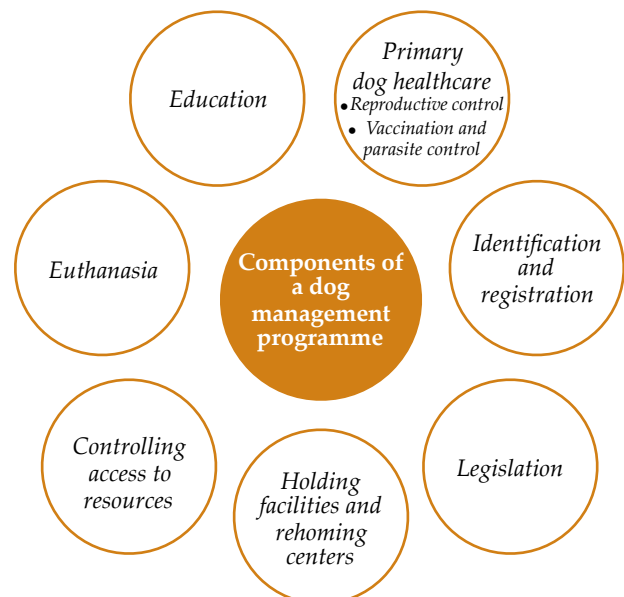
### 1.4.3 Step 3: Planning the intervention

Once insight has been obtained in what the problem is in Rhodes and which factors cause this problem, interventions can be planned in order to *solve* the problem.

First, a selection must be made in which solutions are most suitable for the case of Rhodes. A list of components that are considered successful for a dog management programme according to existing literature and the experience of World Animal Protection (WAP, 2015) are shown in figure 1.2 and explained more in detail in appendix A.

Finally, once the assessment is finalized and the priority issues are clear, as well as the best way to deal with these issues, it is time to design the program. In the context of this thesis research this step involves developing the recommendations, which simultaneously will be the last chapter of this study.

Figure 1.2 | Components dog management



\*Adapted from *Humane Dog Management* (WAP, 2015)



### 1.4.4 Research questions

Thus, based on the theories of ICAM (2007) and World Animal Protection (2015), the following main research questions will be answered throughout this research:

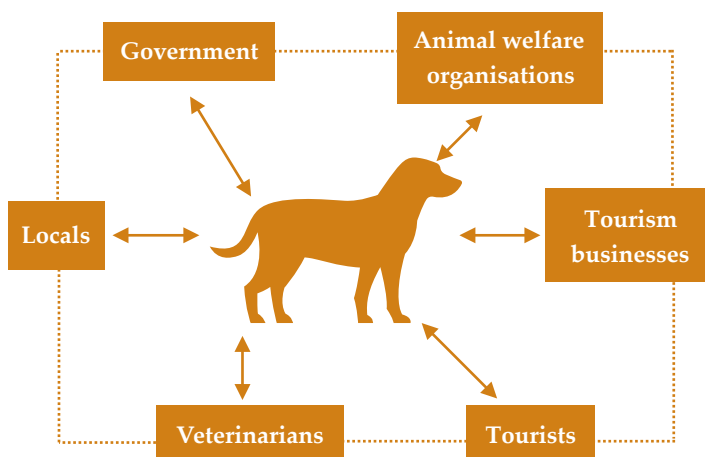
1. What is the current situation when it comes to free-roaming dogs in Rhodes?
2. What are the roles and attitudes of the different stakeholder groups?
3. How can the free-roaming dogs best be managed in Rhodes?

### 1.5 Conceptual model

As this research is carried out through a multi-stakeholder approach, one of the goals was to develop an own model, based on the stakeholder relationships. Thus, with the aim of gaining more detailed insight into the roles of all actors involved, a stakeholder network was created. Besides visualising all relationships in one concrete image, this network also acts as a starting point for drawing future recommendations. Therefore, this network is explained at the end of the conclusions in chapter 6, on page 79.

As shown in the conceptual model below, the effect of the free-roaming dogs in Rhodes will be assessed in regards to the different stakeholders involved and vice versa. Additionally, also relationships amongst the actors themselves will be explored. This stakeholder network is based on existing theory, which will be more thoroughly explained in the next chapter.

Figure 1.3| Conceptual model stakeholder network



### 1.6 Dissertation structure

Chapter 1 provided an introduction of the research topic and explained its relevance as well as which design will be followed.

Next, chapter 2 will cover relevant literature that is currently available about this topic.

Moreover, in chapter 3 the methodology and methods will be discussed that were chosen to carry out this study.

Chapter 4 will demonstrate all findings of the field research and chapter 5 will discuss these findings in regards to the existing literature that was earlier explored.

Subsequently, chapter 6 will draw conclusions for this research.

Finally, in chapter 7 the conclusions are made concrete by means of developing recommendations for all stakeholder groups.

The references illustrate all sources that were used in order to conduct this research.

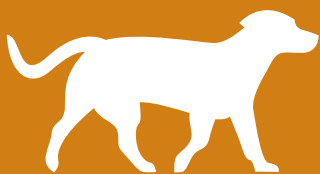


# Chapter 2

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This chapter will illustrate all relevant literature and concepts related to the topic of this dissertation.

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# Literature review

## 2.1 Animals in the tourism industry

Animals are inseparably connected to our everyday life. Regardless of where we live, whether it is in modern urban cities or rural villages, non-human animals cohabit these places with us. However, the level of acceptance may vary between the extremes of seeing them as companions to love and take care of, or as vermin that needs to be banned from our domestic lives.

Nonetheless, the involvement of animals in our everyday life makes it inevitable that these creatures are also present in 'tourism spaces and experiences' (Markwell, 2015).

According to Cohen (2009) tourism is the perfect context for exploring human-animal relationships, as the ways of interaction are abundant, such as viewing, hunting or fishing. But even eating local animals, as means of an exotic culinary experience, has become a tourist attraction on its own (Quan and Wang, 2004). However, Fennell (2012a) and Markwell (2015) both stress the fact that human-animal relationships in tourism go beyond their primary role as attractions, as they can also be seen as commodities (e.g. souvenirs), means of transportation or even threats that need to be avoided or managed.

In total, Leiper (2004) acknowledges four stages in which animals can influence tourist experiences, which according to Markwell (2015, p. 6) match the phases of the tourist experience, being: "pre-travel decision making; travel to destination; at-destination experiences; and post travel remembering which feeds into the decision-making process for forthcoming trips".

In fact, animals can become associated with a particular culture or destination (such as kangaroos for Australia) and can even be a driving factor to travel (safari in Africa).

In the contrary, negative perceptions of animals can cause the opposite effect and the risk of encountering a dangerous animal like a shark or a snake, or get a disease like malaria can withhold tourists from traveling to certain places (Markwell, 2015). This shows that animals can also influence a tourist experience in a negative way. Furthermore, in the post-travel stage these negative experiences can even have an impact on the travel decisions of others, as in the sharing economy of today we can easily influence travel decisions of friends and family, or even strangers online (Jenkins, 2003; Markwell, 2015).

It comes to show that animals are not only inevitable when it comes to our everyday lives, but also in regards to tourism they have a huge impact. Whether this influence is negative or positive is dependent on multiple factors, including the rising concern of animal welfare and ethics. This is thoroughly explained in the next paragraph.

## 2.2 Animal welfare and ethics

Animal welfare is the concept behind scientific and moral attitudes in regards to the use of animals (Fennell, 2013). Theoretically, it refers to the 'state of an animal' (Hill and Broom, 2009). According to the Global Welfare Guidance for Animals in Tourism (ABTA, 2013, p. 7) "an animal is in a reasonable state of welfare if it is healthy, comfortable, well-nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear and distress". Furthermore, terms like animal care, husbandry or humane treatment relate to the way animals are taken care of and appropriate handling of animal welfare demands "disease prevention and veterinary treatment, appropriate shelter, management, nutrition, humane handling and humane slaughter/euthanasia" (ABTA, 2013, p.7).

The 'five freedoms' (developed by the Farm Animal Welfare Council in 1979) globally serve as an indicator for animal welfare and it is the responsibility of suppliers, animal owners and keepers to provide animals with what they need in order to maintain an appropriate level of welfare (ABTA, 2013).

Table 2.1 | Five freedoms Animal Welfare (FAWC, 1979)

Five freedoms
<p><b>1. Freedom from hunger and thirst</b> by ready access to fresh water and diet to maintain health and vigor.</p>
<p><b>2. Freedom from discomfort</b> by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.</p>
<p><b>3. Freedom from pain, injury or disease</b> by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.</p>
<p><b>4. Freedom to express normal behaviour</b> by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.</p>
<p><b>5. Freedom from fear and distress</b> by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering</p>

Animal welfare goes hand in hand with ethics, which is a discipline concerned with moral principles of what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' (Lovelock and Lovelock, 2013).

As society changes, moral values and beliefs are also subject to change. This is mainly due to scientific and economic development or transforming cultures as a result of globalisation (Gras-Dijkstra, 2009).

One reason why animal welfare sometimes comes in second to that of humans is related to the '*scala naturae*' (scale of nature), which places humans over any other species according to features like language, consciousness, sentience, the possession of a soul etcetera. Because humans have superior cognitive capacities, this is used as justification to use (and sometimes abuse) these 'simpler' beings for human needs (Fennell, 2014).

### 2.2.1 Tourist perceptions

Intrinsic motivations and the level of awareness both influence what tourists are willing to accept (Reynolds and Braithwaite, 2001; Lück, 2003; Orams, 1997). A study of Moorhouse et al. (2016) demonstrated that the majority of tourists is not aware of animal welfare conditions at tourist attractions.

While assessing reviews on TripAdvisor, which is currently the most popular and influential website of its own kind (Chipkin, 2015), the researchers learned that even for attractions with the lowest animal welfare scores, still 80% of tourists left a positive review. Furthermore, their study suggested that tourists are only able to show disapproval to certain attractions when there are obvious signs of poor welfare.

This sentiment is confirmed by Fennell (2012b) and Shani (2009) as most tourists seem to accept the use of animals, as long as they believe that the animals are adequately taken care of. Accordingly, Grennan and Fielding (2008) indicated that interactions between tourist and animals in the Bahamas enhanced the holiday experience when animal welfare was considered to be good, but when animals seemed uncared for the holiday experience decreased and visitors were left with a bad impression of the island. However, Moorhouse et al. (2016, p. 7) argue that tourists are "inadequate assessors, because both welfare and conservation impacts are difficult to judge without specialist (or at least sufficient) knowledge".

Furthermore, tourists are not considered to be a 'homogenous group' (Budeanu, 2007). Therefore, perspectives on animal welfare and moral values and beliefs can vary between tourists, especially from different countries and cultures (Moorhouse et al., 2016). Moreover, the holiday destination may have different values and beliefs regarding animal welfare than what is usual in tourists' home countries (Dickman et al., 2015). Although this 'ethical relativism' is not an excuse for accepting animal abuse (Dickman et al., 2015) or take upon other perspectives (Fennell, 2006), oftentimes "it may be the tourists attending these attractions who act against their own ethical values, not necessarily the attraction owners or wider industry" (Moorhouse et al., 2016, p. 7).

According to Alegre and Garau (2010) negative circumstances can influence tourist satisfaction and therefore their intention to return to a destination in the future. There are, however, discrepancies in tourists' attitudes and their actual behaviour (Fennell, 2012b). In fact, there frequently appears to be a so-called 'attitude-behaviour gap' between what ethical consumers mention they will do and what they actually do at the time of purchase (Carrington et al., 2010); Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014). Accordingly, a large amount of previous research has proven contradictions between people's wish to behave morally (and be perceived that way by others) and people's actual unethical actions (Bazerman and Gino, 2012).

Furthermore, a study about tourist opinions on animal culling in South Australia (Moskwa, 2015) demonstrated that there seems to be a significant difference as for which animal is involved and the acceptance level of tourists. This might be related to the moral stance people can have in regards to certain species (O'Neil et al., 2008).

These opinions can be influenced by the characteristics of different animals and it is often suggested that people are generally more concerned about the welfare of larger and 'charismatic' animal species (Fuhrman and Ladewig, 2008; Knegtering et al., 2002).

As humans have a close relationship with companion animals like dogs and cats (Holmberg, 2014a), it may be no surprise that their welfare could have a significant effect on tourist experiences. Accordingly, the welfare and protection of these animals is often debated and is even included in the legislation of many countries.

### 2.2.2 European legislation on welfare and protection of companion animals

Although companion animals are proven to be important family members (Faraco, 2008), all over the world cases of abuse, abandonment and neglect of these animals occur (Garcia et al., 2012).

Management strategies for abandoned, abused or neglected animals can differ between countries and each national government is influenced by various social, legal, financial and ethical issues (FAO, 2014; Duarte Cardoso et al., 2017). Hence, Refinetti (2006) stresses the importance of recognising the legal frameworks that are produced in order to protect companion animals, with special attention for the most common companion animals; dogs and cats.

During the Roman Empire animals were categorised in regards to their economic value, either being 'domestic, traction or load animals', if not classified as 'wild' (Alves, 1999). Animals were considered as 'things' and in the Middle Ages even condemned and viewed as vermin, sometimes on behalf of religious beliefs (Lossouarn, 1905).

Nonetheless, after centuries of negligence of animal rights, with time several laws and regulations were initiated to protect domestic animals and in the second half of the 20th century multiple countries in Western Europe introduced regulations regarding animal protection (Santana, 2004).

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization initiated a significant step towards animal protection with the establishment of the Universal Declaration of Animal Rights of October 15, 1978 (Duarte Cardoso et al., 2017).

A few years later there was also progress on European level, as the Council of Europe created The European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals in 1987 (Araújo, 2003), stating that: "*man has a moral obligation to respect all living creatures and bearing in mind that pet animals have a special relationship with man*" and "*considering the importance of pet animals in contributing to the quality of life and their consequent value to society*" (Council of Europe, 1987, preamble).

The European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals ratifies two fundamental principles for animal welfare, namely that "nobody shall cause a pet animal unnecessary pain, suffering or distress" and "nobody shall abandon a pet animal" (Council of Europe, 1987, article 3).

Moreover, this convention also demands state members to "promote the reduction of the number of stray animals using methods that do not cause pain, suffering, or distress, encouraging the birth control and establishing rules for the arrest, detention, and euthanasia of companion animals (articles 12 and 13)" (Duarte Cardoso et al., 2017, p. 67). Furthermore, the European countries also agreed to promote educational programs (Council of Europe, 1987, article 14).

In addition, on the first of December 2009, the 'Treaty of Lisbon' (the European Constitution), acknowledged animals as 'sentient beings' (Villa et al., 2014).

However, on national level there is no harmony among the member states (Araújo, 2005) and although there are one hundred million dogs and cats within the EU, there is no general EU legislation regarding pet animal welfare (European Parliament, 2012). Moreover, despite of the different treaties, there are some European countries that have failed to successfully implement a progressive animal legislation. Nonetheless, a common goal was established for all European Member states to make sure that protection of companion animals is maintained and animals are treated as sentient beings who are able to suffer, rather than viewing them as 'things' (Duarte Cardoso et al., 2017).



### 2.2.3 Greek law companion animals

In 2012 a new law was introduced in Greece with the aim of protecting companion animals, including strays (Animal Welfare Law 4039/12). This law comes with tremendous changes, and was pressured by national and international animal welfare organisations and protest of animal lovers who could not bear the sight of cats and dogs getting tortured, hanged, shot, drowned or poisoned without consequence any longer.

With the advent of this law, the use of animals in circuses is banned, micro-chipping is made compulsory, an electronic database for registration of pets and their owners is established, all captured strays will be microchipped, neutered and treated and abuse of animals is made punishable by imprisonment and fines (Keep Talking Greece, 2011).

## 2.3 Human-dog relationships

Since two decades there has been an increase in so-called 'more-than-human' geographies (Lorimer, 2010; Philo and Wilbert, 2000; Wolch and Emel 1998). As Haraway (2003) defines, "the fundamental concept of these geographies is to find complementary ways of 'being with' non-human creatures", including "human perception on companion species" (Cretan, 2015, p.155-156). Consequently, the roles, values and beliefs regarding companion animals have underwent significant change over these last few decades (Holmberg, 2014b).

According to Haraway (2008) the relationship between humans and companion species is one of inequality. Yet, the role of humans in relation to other animals keeps changing and regulations in regards to pet ownership and animal welfare are being tightened globally (Holmberg, 2014b). The author further describes the complexity of the power relations between humans and animals, as on the one hand the law enables humans to claim an animal as their property (Miller, 2011), but on the other hand animal welfare laws all around the world claim that owners are obliged to take proper care of their animals (Holmberg, 2014b).

However, not only owned animals have a legal status, as also 'street dogs' are claimed to be "a legal category of animal being" (Cretan, 2015).

According to Duarte Cardoso et al. (2017) the relationship between humans and dogs is one of the most powerful relationships amongst species.

As a matter of fact, the relationship between humans and dogs goes far back into history. That is to say, dogs are the first animal species to ever be domesticated in the world (Coppinger and Schneider, 1995; Stafford, 2006).

When it comes to the domestication of dogs, two different theories exist (Darwin, 1858; Coppinger and Coppinger, 2001). These theories both come from a different stance of whether dogs were influenced by humans in the process or not. Both theories lead to a different interpretation of the origin and nature of human-dog relationships. At the moment, the so-called Pinocchio theory is more popular and simultaneously sets the tone when it comes to human's responsibility of dog care (Ruiz-Izagirre, 2013).

### 2.3.1 Man's best friend

Ever since dogs were domesticated, they fulfil useful roles to humans as companion, guide, guardian, security, detecting diseases, herding, protecting livestock or for transport purposes, dependent upon the socio-cultural background of a community (Stafford, 2006; Coppinger and Schneider, 1995; WAP, 2015).

Furthermore, research has proven the positive impact dogs can have on the general health and well-being of people (Turner et al., 2013; Serpell, 1991). Hence, co-existence of humans and dog is known for its mutual benefits (Podberscek, 2006).

However, the status of dogs has slowly changed from being classified as 'man's best friend' to becoming "a source of social, political and medical concern" (Beck, 1975, p. 1317). Changes in regards to the ecology of urban dog populations have raised and enriched the negative interactions between humans and dogs (Beck, 1975).

Nowadays, the presence of animals and human-animal relationships are frequently contested (Holmberg, 2011) and when crossing certain borders, non-human animals can be depicted as vermin and accordingly be treated like such (Jerolmack, 2013; Griffiths et al., 2000).

Thus, although dogs can help humans to confront the isolation and anxieties of urban life (Heiman, 1956; Levenson, 1972), for other people dogs might be seen as a hindrance.

### 2.3.2 Cultural differences

The perspective on dogs does not only differ between owners and non-owners (Beck, 1975) but also between cultures there can be differences in what is perceived as a normal attitude towards dogs (Stafford, 2006; Coppinger and Schneider, 1995).

As a matter of fact, many studies have shown that not only between countries but also between urban and rural areas discrepancies can be found. This, as in Bhutan (Rinzin et al. (2016), Zimbabwe (Butler and Bingham, 2000), Kenya (Kitala et al., 2001), Bolivia (Suzuki et al., 2008), Mexico (Flores-Ibarra and Estrella-Valunzuella, 2004), Chile (Acosta-Jamett et al., 2010) and Thailand (Kongkaew et al., 2004) dog owners were more motivated to keep a dog for guarding crops, home premises or livestock in rural areas, while companionship was more popular in urban areas.

Moreover, according to the beliefs of many countries in the 'Global North', dogs are considered a family member, thus living under the same roof (Lord et al., 2012) while in other cultures it is more common to let canines stay in the backyard, on the roof or with the livestock (Kachani and Heath, 2014).

Nevertheless, out of all dogs in the world the majority (80%) can be defined as a 'village dog' (Lord et al., 2012). These dogs are usually roaming free on the streets whilst looking for food, and can be associated with one or multiple households (Coppinger and Coppinger, 2001).

Whether dogs belong on the street or not is a phenomenon extensively discussed and questioned by many. Some might argue that dogs do not belong on the street in a modern world (Srinivasan, 2013; Philo and Wilbert, 2000). This stance comes from the eighteenth century European idea of 'domesticity, aesthetics and sanitation' (Atkins, 2012). Furthermore, from an animal welfare perspective, concerns regarding the welfare of village dogs are often discussed. Animal welfare discourses claim that dogs are owned and their owners are responsible to take care of their well-being. Frequently, money is raised by these organisations to 'help' village dogs in developing countries (Falconer, 2009).

Yet, Steeves (2005) argues that the definition of 'care' and 'home' is questionable and the neighbourhood can also be called home. Furthermore, in a village setting dogs have more freedom to move around as supposed to the majority of canines in developed countries (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2011).

Besides, Rehn and Keeling (2011) highlight the fact that most dogs in developed countries are left alone inside the house for a period of time every day, whereas village dogs have the whole village to wander around and follow and approach other animals or humans for companionship.

To conclude, within different cultures, there are controversial thoughts about the relationship between humans and dogs and the place where dogs belong, whether it is in homes, backyards or on the street. Also the level of responsibility of humans to take care of a dog differs among cultures and from which perspective you look at it.

These different stances have been extensively discussed in the literature and expert and animal welfare discourses often reflect to street dogs as vermin or a hindrance, or as victims that need to be saved. In the contrary, the caretakers of many village dogs describe their relationship with these canines as one of mutual recognition, where village dogs can take care of themselves and are socialised from the very beginning to fit within the lifestyle of the community (Ruiz-Izaguirre et al., 2013).

### 2.3.3 Classification and categorisation

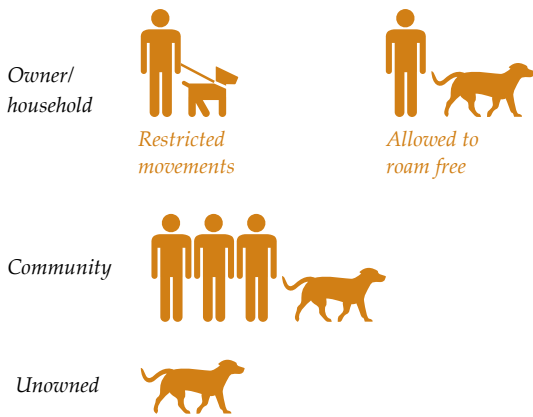
The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE, 2017a) makes a distinction between *owned dogs* and *unowned dogs*. Within these, the International Companion Animal Management Coalition (ICAM Coalition) specifies three different categories of dog ownership, namely: owned with restricted movements, owned and allowed to roam and unowned (ICAM, 2007).

In this case an 'owned dog' is a dog with one or more persons (e.g. a household) who claim responsibility and commit to take care of its physical, environmental and behavioural needs according to the local legislation.

In contrary, stray dogs are dogs that are not under direct control by one or more persons or are allowed to roam free (OIE, 2017a).

Kachani and Heath (2014) specify three different types of stray dogs, including free-roaming owned dogs that are not under direct control at all times, free-roaming dogs without owners (including community dogs which are fed by the community but not owned by an individual) and feral dogs (domestic dogs that became wild).

Figure 2.1 | Types of ownership

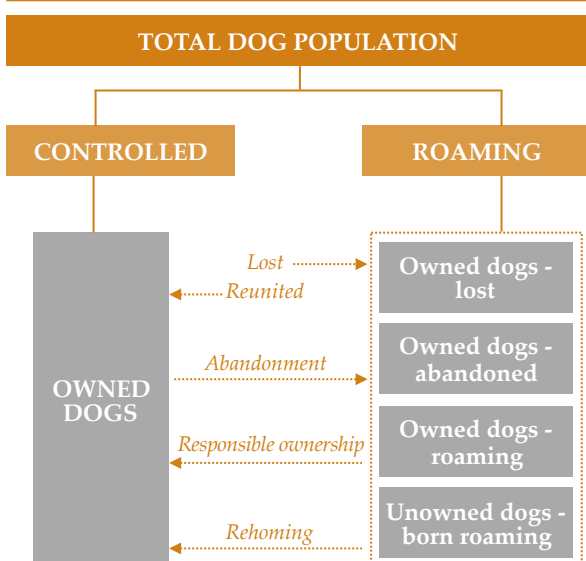


Moreover, from a dog population management perspective, the ICAM Coalition primarily characterises dogs in terms of their behaviour or location (whether they are controlled or roaming) before categorising them by their ownership status. This is demonstrated in the framework in figure 2.2. According to ICAM a roaming dog can either be owned or unowned and it all comes down to responsible ownership whether a dog becomes a problem for others (ICAM, 2007).

The framework shows the dynamic relationship between the two main characteristics ‘controlled’ and ‘roaming’, as the situation of dogs can change by becoming lost, reunited or abandoned, and responsible ownership or rehoming.

Although this framework shows that unowned roaming dogs can become controlled dogs by means of rehoming, one might argue that also abandoned or even lost dogs can be re-homed.

Figure 2.2 | Framework dog population



\*Adapted from Humane Dog Population Management Guidance (ICAM, 2007)

### Owned dog

As mentioned before, an owned dog can be defined as a dog where one or more individuals take responsibility for and claim it as ‘their own’. However, this does not always mean that the ownership classifies as ‘responsible ownership’ (ICAM, 2007).

### Responsible animal ownership

When it comes to animal welfare, principally owners have a duty to take appropriate care of their animals. This means that animals should be provided with resources like food, water, health care and social interaction in order for them to have an acceptable quality of life. As a measurement, the five freedoms are often used as a guideline (as shown in paragraph 2.2). Furthermore, responsible ownership includes minimising the risk of a dog from becoming a threat to the public or other animals. Some countries have included this rule in their legislation (ICAM, 2007).

### (Free-)Roaming dog

The term ‘roaming dog’ is inter-changeably used with other terms like ‘free-roaming dog’, ‘free-ranging dog’ or ‘stray-dog’. These terms involve both owned as well as unowned roaming dogs, as in many countries dogs that do have an owner are allowed to roam free on public property. In this study the term ‘free-roaming dogs’ implies all dogs that are “not currently under direct control or restricted by a physical barrier” (ICAM, 2007, p. 5).

### Community dog

There is also the possibility that more people from one community claim the ownership of an animal. In this case ICAM (2007) defines these dogs as ‘community dogs’. Sometimes these dogs are also referred to as ‘village dogs’ in the literature (Ruiz-Izaguirre, 2013). Although these dogs are somehow owned, generally speaking they all belong to the free-roaming category (Coppinger and Coppinger, 2001).

### Feral dog/unowned dog

Usually a feral dog is a descendant of domestic dogs who became wild and is often born on the streets. However, since feral dogs are not socialised by humans, their dependency level as well as their behaviour might differ to domestic dogs (Green and Gipson, 1994).



## 2.4 Dog population concerns

Already since 1975 there has been a constantly growing awareness of the impact of both urban pet and stray dogs on the general well being of the public and its health. Extensive populations of free-roaming dogs can cause issues to public health through bites and transmitting zoonotic diseases like rabies or Echinococcosis (Kachani and Heath, 2014; Feldman et al., 2004; Zinsstag et al., 2009; WHO, 2005; Robertson and Thompson, 2002; Keuster et al., 2005; Tenzin et al., 2011a; Tenzin et al., 2011b).

Consequently, every year many people from all around the globe are hospitalised after being bitten or attacked by a dog (Georges and Adesiyun, 2008; Morgan and Palmer, 2007). These bites do not only cause physic injury, mental trauma and economic costs (WAP, 2015), but also the risk of infectious diseases is high, as for many human infections the dog is identified as the 'major definitive host' (Ouhelli et al., 1997; Vaniscotte et al., 2011; Carmena and Cardona, 2013).

Especially unowned dogs are classified as being the most difficult category in dog population management when it comes to controlling zoonotic diseases (Kachani and Heath, 2014). However, also in more developed places the threat of disease is high, as a result of the close relationship between humans and both owned and unowned dogs (Cardona and Carmena, 2013; Acosta-Jamett et al., 2010).

Besides health threats, dog population concerns vary from nuisance through noise and fouling, livestock predation, fear of aggressive behaviour and the cause of road traffic accidents (ICAM, 2007). As a consequence, governments have to deal with economic costs regarding the management of dog populations, treating zoonotic diseases, protecting wildlife and livestock, removing carcasses and damage when it comes to tourism (WAP, 2015).

Free-roaming dogs can damage the image of a destination as they can give tourists a bad impression of the locals (Plumridge and Fielding 2003; Alie et al., 2007) and create a sign of underdevelopment (Avédikian, 2010). As a consequence, this can affect the local economy (Plumridge and Fielding, 2003).

Moreover, countries could face political costs as a result from reputational damage due to inhumane treatment of dogs (WAP, 2015).

Additionally, concerns also involve welfare issues of dogs, as roaming dogs can be accompanied by many

welfare problems, such as: "malnutrition, disease, injury through traffic accidents, injury through fighting and abusive treatment" (ICAM, 2007, p. 4). Moreover, efforts of controlling the population can also lead to notable welfare problems, including: "inhumane methods of killing such as strychnine poisoning, electrocution and drowning, cruel methods of catching and poorly equipped and managed holding facilities" (ICAM, 2007, p. 4).

Whether decreasing the size of a roaming canine population is considered a necessity is to some extent subjective. Every situation will address people who tolerate roaming dogs and people who do not. In some countries roaming dogs even are valued and beloved 'owned' animals, that are allowed to roam freely by the local community. Reducing their population number may be unnecessary or even unwanted. Nonetheless, improving the welfare and health of these dogs in order to reduce zoonotic risks and other threats may generally still be perceived as useful and desirable (ICAM, 2007).

### 2.4.1 Related causes

According to World Animal Protection (WAP, 2015) there are different causes which lead to dog population concerns and the issue of free-roaming dogs.

For starters, it has a lot to do with irresponsible dog ownership. This leads to the uncontrollably breeding of dogs, impulse pet purchases and dogs being given as gifts, all increasing the risk of abandonment. Moreover, allowing dogs to roam without control and a lack of health care and identification are also irresponsible acts of owners which aggravates the problem.

Besides owners, also puppy farms, illegal breeders and irresponsible home breeders contribute to the issue by disobeying specific breeding requirements. Furthermore, illegal trade and trafficking of dogs, like the meat trade and illegal transport of specific dog breeds, fighting dogs, or dogs for international adoption cause dog population concerns.

These phenomenon often arise from the lack of money and resources, deficient legislation and ignorance from the different stakeholders involved. When there is means of poverty, both owners and governments lack the funds they need to take proper care of these animals. However, also ignorance is a great influence, which often comes to show by a poor understanding of animal welfare, the behaviour of dogs and associated risks like disease transmission.

As a consequence, the importance of vaccination and identification is often overlooked.

Also governments can show ignorance by failing to recognize a dog population management concept or not prioritising the issue when necessary. Besides ignorance, also poor animal welfare legislation and their insufficient enforcement are triggers which can lead to dog population concerns.

In addition, veterinarians too play an important role, as lack of (proper) supplies, training and cooperation with the municipality, authorities and other (private) veterinarians adds to the problem.

Lastly, places with a lot of resources for dogs to scavenge and feed themselves (often as a result of deficient waste management) or people who feed roaming dogs are contributing factors to the origin and survival of free-roaming dogs (WAP, 2015).

Figure 2.3| Framework dog population concerns and causes



## 2.5 Tourist-dog encounters

Interactions between humans and dogs consist of events of action and response between both parties. Yet, these interactions are related to different perceptions and discourses of local and external stakeholders. In a tourism context, internal stakeholders are the caregivers of a dog (owners), or villagers in a community. External stakeholders are: tourists, animal welfare NGOs, public health authorities and wildlife authorities or agencies (Ruiz-Izaguirre, 2013).

How animals react to people depends on previous experiences they have regarding humans. These experiences can differ between familiar humans (i.e. caregiver) and unfamiliar humans (Waiblinger et al., 2006). Hence, dogs might react different to tourists than they would normally do.

The way local people interact with dogs can aid in shaping its behaviour and therefore its socialisation with humans (Ruiz-Izaguirre et al., 2014).

In the Bahamas for instance, it was assumed that the rare interaction between people and free-roaming dogs made the dogs shy of humans (Fielding et al., 2005). Research in African villages further showed that dog's experiences with humans were mostly 'neutral', leading to a usual behaviour of scavenging around people, but still keeping a safe distance (Coppinger and Coppinger, 2001).

A mismatch between expected dog behaviour of tourists, based on their perception and previous experience in their home town and the actual behaviour of a dog on the holiday destination may cause dilemmas (Beckman et al., 2014).

Especially when dogs are not socialised (enough) with unfamiliar people, this can lead to negative experiences for humans (Ruiz-Izaguirre, 2013).

According to Cornelissen and Hopster (2010) dog bites outside households often include unfamiliar people, even if these people do not intentionally interact with the dog. Therefore, the risk of dog bites for tourists is prominently present (Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers, 2012).

However, tourist-dog encounters can also have a positive touch, as in the villages studied by Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers (2012) tourists frequently interacted with canines by feeding them and sometimes even adopting them.

Nonetheless, the authors mention that also this can have a downside, as when tourists leave in low season it might get difficult for the dogs to find enough food.

All in all, the nature of tourist-dog encounters can be either positive or negative, depending on the perceptions of tourists and the behaviour of dogs. Both elements will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

### 2.5.1 Dog behaviour

Ortolani et al. (2009) suggest that studying a dog's behaviour is useful for gaining insight into the attitude of free-roaming dogs. This is especially valuable when evaluating the risk they might pose to humans (Ortolani et al., 2009) as some may believe that free-roaming dogs must be aggressive to survive (Cameron, 1997). Besides, even pet dogs can show aggression, which mostly is directed to either other dogs or towards strangers (Duffy et al., 2008). Hence, also pet dogs can pose a risk for tourists if their owner lets them roam free.

According to Beck (1973) dogs are not solitary animals by nature and therefore the social structure of these animals often consists of groups or 'packs'.

Furthermore, while studying the behavioural response of Ethiopian village dogs in regards to strangers, Ortolani et al. (2009) observed similar characteristics to other free-roaming dog populations assessed in other areas around the globe. Therefore, the authors suggest that these dog populations are relatively homogenous when it comes to their behavioural ecology.

However, their study did indicate differences in behaviour in regards to the location and social setting of the dogs. Dogs inside or near a home were more likely to vocalise (bark/growl) and react aggressive to the observer's approach compared to dogs on the street. The same counts for dogs that were alone or in pairs, who were simultaneously also more likely to avoid the observer's approach compared to dogs in groups (3+).

In general, more than 70% of the dogs ignored the observer at first, which seems to be the main attitude towards villagers as well. Especially when dogs were approached in the street, avoiding was a frequent response, assuming that most of them are shy of humans. Nonetheless, 11% reacted aggressively towards the observer, which always started with barking or growling (Ortolani et al., 2009).

The same tendency was noticed in the unfamiliar human test of Ruiz-Izaguirre et al. (2014) in Mexico, as most adult dogs refused to approach the unfamiliar human, even after repeated attempts. Furthermore, their study indicated that there are some motivational factors which might influence the likelihood of an approaching canine, such as hunger or tiredness.

Also previous experiences can play a role, as for instance dogs that often receive food from caregivers or tourists may be more likely to approach humans. Moreover, in the study in Mexico, puppies were more likely to approach the unfamiliar human in comparison to adult dogs. This can again be related to previous experiences, as puppies have fewer previous experiences than older dogs. Finally, in contrast to the assumptions of the authors, the welfare and body condition of the dogs did not influence their behaviour or characteristics.

In addition, research of Vas et al. (2005), where the responses of adult pet dogs in Hungary were compared in an unfamiliar human test, indicated that human's signals (either friendly or threatening) can influence a dog's behaviour.

### 2.5.2 Tourist perceptions

Haraway (2008) argues that nowadays dogs have become commodities and the pet industry behind them portrays the capitalist way of life. Therefore, seeing free-roaming dogs may be perceived as peculiar and unappealing to foreigners, as Falconer (2009, p. 14) describes: "Emaciated dogs sleeping on rubbish piles, injured dogs limping across market squares, and dogs so afflicted with mange they're basically scratching themselves to death".

However, Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers (2012) noticed that these perceptions are often biased by cultural differences and frame of reference.

Furthermore, the authors state that tourists' opinions could also be influenced by whether they own a dog at home or if they are a member of an animal welfare group (Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers, 2012).

This was confirmed in a study of tourists' perceptions of free-roaming dogs in Samoa by Beckman et al. (2014), as these authors also found a negative correlation between whether the respondent was a dog owner and if the dogs in Samoa were perceived as a nuisance. Besides, the authors describe that tourists in Samoa mostly come from New Zealand and Australia and therefore might have a different view on dog care and ownership.

In this case, most of the respondents stated to be a 'dog lover' and said they felt sorry for the dogs (Beckman et al., 2014).

'Feeling sorry for the dogs' is a sentiment noticed more often, as in the Bahamas this statement was the main response of a quarter of the surveyed American tourists, and a majority of 66% even perceived allowing dogs to roam free as being cruel (Plumridge and Fielding, 2003). Hence, the nature of dog ownership and dog care in a destination might fail to meet the expectations and standards of foreigners, as for instance American tourists tend to believe that "Bahamians do not care as much for their pets as they do" (Fielding, 2008a, p.358).

Similarly, in Samoa, most respondents (mainly originating from New Zealand and Australia) questioned if dogs in Samoa had owners and mentioned that the dogs were different than the dogs in their home country (Beckman et al., 2014).

Furthermore, a study of Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers (2012) confirmed that considerably more North American and European tourists were worried about the welfare of the dogs in Mexico than tourists coming from Mexico itself.

Nonetheless, sometimes the perceptions of foreign visitors corresponds with locals beliefs, as not only tourists but also the majority of the locals in Samoa perceived dogs as a nuisance and stated their management required improvement (Farnworth et al., 2012). However, it can also occur that instead of tourists it is the local residents who are most concerned, as in Mexico 50% of locals compared to 33% of tourists believed there were too many dogs (Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers, 2012) and in the Bahamas free-roaming dogs were considered as a nuisance by over 80% of the locals, but only 23% of tourists (Fielding, 2008b).

In general, the most common concerns of tourists when it comes to free-roaming dogs include: too many dogs, aggressive dogs, nuisance (i.e. barking, begging, feces, and spilling of garbage) and welfare issues (i.e. malnutrition, attracting flies and fleas, dirty looking or having diseases such as rabies (Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers, 2012; Beckman et al., 2009; Strickland, 2015).

In addition, research of Webster (2013) amongst over 1,200 US and Canadian travellers showed that, even prior to personal safety concerns, respondents were mostly concerned about the emotional impact it has to see animals suffering on holiday.

In fact, most respondents described their experience of seeing strays as one that upset them (Webster, 2013). Perhaps this can explain the fact that although 30% of the tourists in Mexico was annoyed by dogs begging for food in restaurants, a greater amount of tourists (40%) confessed to feeding them, either 'daily' or 'sometimes' (Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers, 2012).

Whether tourists actually were scared or felt threatened by free-roaming dogs differed among various studies, as in Samoa most tourists avoided dogs for this reason (Beckman et al., 2014), but in the Bahamas only 5% of tourists that came across free-roaming dogs felt threatened (Plumridge and Fielding, 2003). In Bhutan it mainly depends on the time of the day, as most respondents indicated they were not afraid during daytime because most dogs were asleep, but did feel threatened during the night, as dogs formed packs and were intimidating. The same respondents unanimous linked the presence of a collar to the dogs having an owner and being cared for, thus not considering dogs with a collar as strays (Strickland, 2015).

Furthermore, during the study of Beckman et al. (2014) several tourists mentioned to have witnessed 'inappropriate behaviour' against dogs, which they defined as physical abuse and/or lack of care.

All in all, the majority of the tourists questioned about their perceptions of free-roaming dogs stated that they negatively affected their holiday (Beckman et al., 2014; Strickland, 2015; Webster, 2015; Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers, 2012).

The survey of Webster (2013) even indicated that tourists are willing to take action, by means of "reporting it to their hotel or resort (34%), and/or to travel agents or tourism companies (31%), by sharing their travel experience online (29%) or by discouraging family and friends from visiting the destination (25%). Another 22% would share the experience on TripAdvisor or Virtual Tourist and 17% would share it on another review site" (Webster, 2013, p. 4).

Nonetheless, tourists might also have a positive influence, as the study of Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers (2012) suggested that the presence of tourists in a destination might improve the local perception of dog welfare, and could therefore lead to a better treatment of dogs and consequently an improved tourist experience and tourism industry as a whole.



## 2.6 Dog management

The ins and outs of dog management are extensively reported in the literature. One of the definitions states the following: “*Canine population management aims to modify the determinants of population dynamics (reduction of unwanted births and abandonment, increase in prophylactic treatment coverage and immigration control) to promote the health and well-being of both dogs and people*” (Santos Baquero et al., 2016, p. 121).

### 2.6.1 Killing is not the answer

As dog management may be a costly matter, according to Kachani and Heath (2014) in some cases a “no-kill” policy will not apply. However, the ICAM Coalition counter argues that the practice of culling dogs is also a costly method, not only financial but also as regards to public support (Atema et al., 2015). The latter was proven in the study of Cretan (2015) where the major protests in Romania were an example of public uprising against dog culling.

As Cretan (2015, p. 156) explains, in some cases, authorities decide to use more “simple official discursive practices” if culling animals is considered necessary in order to secure the health of the public. This topic gives rise to an extensive debate regarding the ethics of killing animals (Animal Studies Group 2006), especially as too often inhumane methods are used, which usually leads to significant animal suffering (WAP, 2015).

Especially when methods like killing and euthanasia are refused, dog shelters are considered to be a significant tool to control free-roaming dog populations (Passantino et al., 2006).

However, debate also exists about the humanity of life in dog shelters (Srinivasan, 2013; Garner, 2004) as it is not easy nor inexpensive to kennel dogs in the long term without considerable suffering (Natoli et al., 2012; Cafazzo et al., 2014; ICAM, 2007) and some countries might even be unable to afford this method (Dalla Villa et al., 2010). Even then, killing does not seem to be the answer, as euthanasia of healthy dogs is also not considered as an ethical approach (Garner, 2004).

Luckily, alternative options are in abundance, and at the same time more efficient than mass killing as well. This, as killing dogs, even when done in a humanely manner, only deals with the symptoms of the problem and not the underlying causes (ICAM, 2007; WAP, 2015; Johansen and Penrith, 2009).

Thus, in the long run, the impact of euthanasia is not significantly higher than that of other methods such as sterilisation (Amaku et al., 2010; Akamine and Amaku, 2012).

As a matter of fact, mass killing can even be counterproductive to a vaccination programme (Atema et al., 2015), as frequently also healthy and vaccinated dogs are killed, only to be replaced again with unvaccinated puppies and thereby destroying the accumulated herd immunity (WAP, 2015).

Furthermore, it is hypothesised that a sudden decrease of animals as result of mass killing may lead to remaining animals reproducing faster as they have greater resources available, therefore enabling them to easily substitute the culled animals (Kachani and Heath, 2014). This hypothesis has been proven through cases in Latin America, Asia and Africa, as losses here were quickly compensated by an increased survival rate of the remaining dog population (WHO, 1987).

The previous has to do with the so called ‘carrying capacity’, which Kachani and Heath (2014, p. 101) describe as “the upper limit of the dog population density that could be supported by the habitat based on the availability of resources (food, water, shelter) and human acceptance.

Instead of decreasing the amount of dogs, according to Santos Baquero et al. (2016) the solution lies in reducing the carrying capacity. However, the authors argue that this has to be done simultaneously whilst decreasing abandonment and increasing adoption levels, as otherwise the reduced carrying capacity will only lead to a higher mortality rate, due to lack of resources.

Where adoption is a helpful tool in the management of stray dogs and may mitigate the negative impacts of a reduced carrying capacity on the well-being of dogs, Santos Baquero et al. (2016, p. 125) explain the significant role of dog trade control in preventing abandonment. As the authors state, “the recruiting of dogs is an important factor for population management” and “the importance of dog trade is further emphasised by an implicit relationship between dog trade and the carrying capacity of the owned-dog population”.

Meaning, if the industry of dog products keeps encouraging dog purchase, consumers may get false expectations about what it means to live with, and take care of a dog (Santos Baquero et al., 2016).

These false expectations may lead to situations where dog behaviour gets problematic and the lifestyle of people may change reluctantly (Patronek et al., 1996). These problems are the main reasons behind abandonment, therefore making indiscriminate dog trade a high risk factor for abandonment (Scarlett et al., 1999; Salman et al., 2000).

Thus, if the industry behind dog trade and dog products takes responsibility in order to avoid false expectations, a part of potential dog buyers is most likely to change their minds, as soon as they realise they are not able to take proper care of a dog. This will immediately have a positive influence on the level of abandonment and therefore the amount of (ownerless) stray dogs (Santos Baquero et al., 2016).

Besides managing resources and promoting responsible ownership, many authors mentioned the value of so-called 'trap/neuter/release' (TNR) systems (Reece and Chawla, 2006; Molento et al., 2007), also known as 'catch-neuter-vaccinate-release' (CNVR) programmes (Rinzin et al., 2016; Tenzin et al., 2015).

As Dogs Trust and Battersea Dogs & Cats Home (2008, p. 12) describe, a TNR or CNVR programme proceeds as follows: "Dogs are caught and taken from the area where they are living. They are then castrated or spayed (their sexual organs removed so they can't reproduce), treated for zoonotic diseases (and vaccinated against rabies where appropriate as per the law), marked in some way so they can be identified at a distance (so they are not re-caught) and then put back where they were found".

Hence, a CNVR programme requires data on the size and distribution of the dog population (Tenzin et al., 2015) in order to estimate the amount of drugs and vaccines that are required for veterinary care (Downes et al., 2013; FAO, 2014). Therefore, these interventions demand long-term planning and the availability of sustainable resources (Totton et al., 2010).

Next to reducing the scope of the dog population, neutered and vaccinated dogs also have an increased life span, (Jackman and Rowan, 2007; Michell, 1998), resulting in a better maintenance of herd immunity against diseases like rabies (Tenzin et al., 2015). Therefore, the authors expect that the well-being and health condition of free-roaming dogs will improve if more dogs are covered by a CNVR program (Tenzin et al., 2015).

## 2.6.2 Dog management around the globe

Kachani and Heath (2014, p. 100) stress the importance of "understanding the attitude of communities to dogs and the factors that influence this behaviour, in order to design a culturally sensitive program that would be accepted and endorsed by that community".

Moreover, as Dalla Villa et al. (2010) describe, the existence and scope of a dog-control program in a particular country depends on the local attitude towards free-roaming dogs and the extent to which financial resources and veterinarians are available to address the issue. Because the capacity of a country to manage free-roaming dogs is directly related to its economic development, these national differences should be considered in international guidelines on dog population control. Accordingly, different strategies should be introduced, that fit the needs and limitations on both local and national level (Dalla Villa et al., 2010).

### OIE-countries

With its 181 member countries, the OIE is the "intergovernmental organisation responsible for improving animal health worldwide" (OIE, 2017b). According to Dalla Villa et al. (2010) free-roaming dogs are a world wide problem affecting countries of all degrees of economic development, but especially poorer countries.

In their research, the authors examined the perceptions of the free-roaming dog problem and its solutions of the government of each OIE-member state, in regards to their Human Development Index (HDI).

Greece is a listed member of the OIE (OIE, 2017c) and despite of the economic crisis has earned the score of 'Very High Human Development' (UNDP, 2016).

Results of the study showed that registration was the most common tool of dog management used by high-HDI countries. Not surprisingly, the use of dog registration and the degree of economic development were positively related. Also the level of adoption seems to be higher in high-HDI countries.

In 72% of the questioned countries, dog control programs for free-roaming dogs were managed by the municipality, usually in collaboration with other parties like NGOs. Moreover, funding mostly comes from the government and the municipality itself.

All the countries that stated to have a dog population management programme, also mentioned using euthanasia and other killing methods. Dog shelters were more often used in high-HDI countries (Dalla Villa et al., 2010).

Although the scope of this research is the island of Rhodes, examples of other countries could still be relevant and are therefore showcased in appendix B.

### 2.6.3 The case of Rhodes

A study of Mannhart et al. (2007) assessed the situation of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes in 2007. According to their research, a new law concerning stray dogs was introduced by the Greek government in 2003, which was initially proposed by the Greek Ministry of Agriculture. This law made it mandatory for municipalities to address the roaming dog issue according to international guidelines. However, two years later in Rhodes and surrounding islands the law was still not successfully applied, hence lacking the expected and desired success.

As an attempt to create insight into the free-roaming dog situation in Rhodes and explore the effect of a possible solution, the authors developed a one year catch-neuter-release project on ownerless dogs (and cats) in Rhodes. This programme was established in cooperation with the local authorities and with the help of international funds.

Dogs were counted in five (urban) areas in Rhodes town, including: Mandraki, Old town, Kanada street, Hospital-Mengafli and Karakonero-Reni.

For every km<sup>2</sup> a total of 29 free-roaming dogs were counted, with most of them being spotted in Mandraki and Old Town. A minority of 24,6% of the counted dogs were indicated as owned animals or so called 'pets'.

When the researchers asked the public's opinion about the issue, the majority of the locals stated that neutering was the only option to deal with the stray dogs. The second best solution according to the citizens of Rhodes was sheltering and rehoming. Although more than 50% of the respondents indicated neutering as a valuable intervention for stray dogs, only 37,5% of dog owners stated their pet was neutered. The reason for this was mostly that "it was against a dog's nature" or the veterinary costs were too high.

Besides, the majority of pet dogs also did not wear a collar and the number of chipped or registered dogs was even less significant (4,6%).

Furthermore, approximately 23% of pet dogs were able to roam free in the streets of Rhodes without being sterilised.

In addition, many citizens stated to feed the street animals on a regular basis (69,3%) and almost all of

the locals (95%) witnessed stray animals eating from garbage containers or dogs or cats being poisoned (77%) (Mannhart et al., 2007).

Hence, according to the research of Mannhart et al. (2007) the most significant origin of the stray dog problem in Rhodes is related to irresponsible pet ownership. Therefore, the authors recommended education of pet owners as one of the key solutions to the problem. This should be done in collaboration with the government, as penalties could have a motivating influence when it comes to responsible ownership.

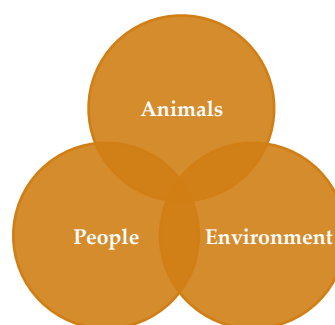
Out of respect for the local private veterinarians, the CNVR-project did not include the treatment of pet animals. Nevertheless, after one year of operating, the researchers had to end the project as the Ministry of Agriculture in Athens did not renew the annual licence which is needed to run a veterinary clinic. According to the authors, this was the result of the anxiety of the local veterinarians, who convinced the authorities to make an end to the project. Consequently, the researchers were unable to obtain more long-term results (Mannhart et al., 2007).

### 2.6.4 A One Health concept

So far it may be clear that canine management is a complex and 'multifactorial' issue. Because co-operation on different levels is needed, namely between agencies operating for both animals, humans and the environment, dog population management belongs to the 'One Health' concept.

This, as free-roaming dogs not only affect other animals, but also people and their surrounding environment as well. Thus, in order to solve existing issues, co-operation between the sectors of animal health, human health and the environment is crucial (WAP, 2015).

Figure 2.4 | One Health concept



\*Adapted from Humane Dog Management (WAP, 2015)

Consequently, to make canine management succeed, all relevant stakeholders should be involved when developing extensive and elaborate strategies. Therefore, besides assessing the source of free-roaming dogs at the start of a dog management programme, also an assessment needs to be made of which stakeholders are involved in the issue and why (WAP, 2015).

In this case, a stakeholder in a dog management programme is considered “anyone who can affect or is affected by dog-related issues” (WAP, 2015, p. 17).

Hence, according to the OIE guidelines (2017a) it is advisable to set up a working group that accepts and agrees with the mindset of the local community and has access to the resources that are required in order to execute the program. This team should consist of all relevant stakeholders who are related to and responsible for dog population management, such as: “representatives of the veterinary authority and other government agencies, veterinarians (they have an understanding of zoonoses, euthanasia procedures and fertility control), representatives of the Departments of Health, Agriculture, Interior, NGOs, local community leaders, dog owners and members of the community that do not own dogs, (these people are concerned by the presence and nuisance of dogs)” (Kachani and Heath, 2014, p. 101).

Especially because dog management requires a lot of resources (human, infrastructure and financial) over a long time frame, it is crucial to make every stakeholder feel ownership of the program (Kachani and Heath, 2014). A more elaborate list of potential stakeholders in dog management according to World Animal Protection (2015) can be found in appendix C.

Although many parties are involved when it comes to dog management, the ICAM Coalition (2007) believes that the main responsible parties are the local and central government. Therefore, in an ideal situation the responsible government authority should be the one bringing all stakeholders together for consultation (WAP, 2015).

Furthermore, according to the ICAM Coalition (2007), animal welfare NGOs (ARNGOs) should not seek the urge to take over the responsibility of authorities, unless there is a contractual agreement involved and the required (financial) resources. Nonetheless, ARNGOs do play a meaningful role when it comes to the guidance and support of government strategies. Therefore, it is essential for these organisations to understand all elements of a dog management programme (ICAM, 2007).

To conclude, as an animal welfare advocate, the ICAM Coalition (2007) argues that a situation where population management is required should always call for the use of humane methods, with improved dog welfare as result. Furthermore, the authors stress the importance of achieving population management in the most effective way possible, due to limited resources and the responsibility of NGOs regarding their sponsors. The fact that the condition, structure and size of dog populations can differ tremendously between and even within countries, has as a consequence that there is not one single procedure that will work in all situations. The only rule of thumb that is universal is the fact that an elaborate programme is needed, focusing on the *causes* of the problem, rather than solely dealing with the *symptoms* of the roaming dog population (ICAM, 2007).

### 2.6.5 Stakeholder network theory

Because dog management requires a multi-stakeholder approach on different levels, its design fits most with the actor-network theory Rowley describes (1997), thereby putting the focus on the stakeholder *environment*, rather than seeing stakeholders on individual level.

The actor-network theory implies that it is not about the identity of actors or the categories they belong to, but rather their interrelations with each other (Luoma-aho and Paloviita, 2010). This network of relationships goes beyond the extent of humans, as also non-human entities are defined as being part of the environment (Cooren and Fairhurst, 2008; Somerville, 1999) and a stakeholder network could consist of people, organisations, machines, and thus also animals (Latour, 1996; Law, 1991).

As Arnaboldi and Spiller (2011, p. 645) describe: “these heterogeneous elements are attributed equal importance and are seen as part of dynamic and never definitive networks, in which the essence for understanding sociological phenomena lies in the associations among them”. Accordingly, if one element changes, this will impact the other actors as well (Luoma-aho and Paloviita, 2010).

Thus, instead of following a dyadic perspective (Freeman, 1984) in this case a stakeholder network should be created, following a *relational* perspective (Pouloudi and Whitley, 1997; Rowley, 1997).







# Chapter 3

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This chapter explains the methodology and methods that were used in order to conduct this research. First, the research philosophy is discussed, as well as the positionality of the researcher. Then, the research methods are explained, as well as how the data is collection and analyzed. Lastly, also the research limitations are illustrated.

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# Methods

## 3.1 Research philosophy

This research has been carried out through an ‘interpretive paradigm’. Building on the relativist ontological belief that there is not one single objective reality (Bailey, 2007), the researcher takes into account that there are multiple ways of interpreting the truth. In this case, ‘reality’ might differ among the various stakeholder groups, or even within those groups. Therefore, the focus of this study lays on social relationships and *meanings*. Or, how Bailey (2007) describes it, as an “empathetic understanding of participants day-to-day experiences and an increased awareness of the multiple meanings given to the routine and problematic events by those in the setting”. Hence, an inductive approach is maintained in order to develop explanations of different phenomena in the empirical world, rather than formulating hypotheses at the start of the study (Jennings, 2010).

Furthermore, this paradigm builds on a subjective epistemological belief that the research is not independent from the researcher, but in fact they are interwoven.

As Guba & Lincoln (1994, p. 109) explain, “the social world is not an entity in and on itself but is local, temporally, and historically situated, fluid, context-specific and shaped in conjunction with the researcher”. The norms, beliefs and values of the researcher will therefore be intertwined with the research and its outcomes.

Moreover, in a tourism research context, the interpretive paradigm implies that the researcher must enter the ‘social setting’ and become one of the social actors within that setting (Jennings, 2010), thus giving the research an ethnographic character (Bryman, 2012).

Accordingly, the methodology of this study includes “interactions with and observations of participants in the setting” (Bailey, 2007, p. 54). Therefore field work has been applied within the destination of Rhodes. This ‘insider’s view’ makes it possible to

identify the multiple realities, as the viewpoint of all social actors are taken into consideration and will be evenly judged (Jennings, 2010).

Finally, the axiological stance of this research involves a disregard of value neutrality, as values are believed to be embedded and interwoven in the research process (Jennings, 2010). Consequently, subjective values and beliefs of the researcher can not be left behind whilst conducting research and shaping its results (Bailey, 2007). Because the researcher is subjectively involved in the process of knowledge making (Jennings, 2010), the position of the researcher will be explained in the next paragraph.

## 3.2 Researcher positionality

Holmes (2014) describes the importance of positionality within research. This concept represents the researcher’s world-view and the chosen position in regards to specific research tasks (Foote and Gau Bartell, 2011; Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013).

An individual’s world view is shaped by values and beliefs, like: gender, race, social class, historical and geographical location, religion, political views, (dis)abilities and so on (Wellington et al., 2005; Sikes, 2004). Some of these aspects are culturally ‘fixed’, such as gender, race or nationality, but other values and beliefs can come from personal life history and experiences, and are therefore subjective and contextual (Chiseri-Strater, 1996).

As Foote and Gau Bartell (2011, p. 46) state: “The positionality that researchers bring to their work, and the personal experiences through which positionality is shaped, may influence what researchers may bring to research encounters, their choice of processes, and their interpretation of outcomes”.

In this case, the positionality of the researcher involves a 23 year old female student of the Master Tourism Destination Management with a previous Bachelor degree in Tourism, Manager Travel Trade. Being half Dutch and half Greek by blood, but half Dutch and half American by nationality, the researcher grew up with different cultures. Nonetheless, being born in the Netherlands, Dutch is the dominating culture. The researcher does not have predominant religious or political beliefs. However, personal affection for the canine race and being owner of a dog may influence the interpretation or outcomes of this research.

### 3.3 Research methods

Both secondary and primary data were used in order to conduct this research. Preparatory to the field research in Rhodes, desk research gave insight into existing data given through sources like academic articles, books, previous thesis studies, reviews and (news) websites.

Coming from an interpretive research philosophy and the aim to gain *understanding*, using qualitative research methods seemed the most appropriate approach. However, where necessary also quantitative methods were used in order to collect all relevant data. Hence, to create a complete as possible picture, multiple methods were used.

Firstly, the observation method would give quantitative and qualitative insight into the current situation when it comes to free-roaming dogs in Rhodes. This gives the researcher a starting point for shaping the remaining research. Simultaneously, this technique enables the researcher to get insight into information that participants may not deliberately give themselves when being questioned about ethical topics.

In addition, interviews were used as a second qualitative research method, as questioning the different stakeholder groups will give insight into their thoughts and possible relationship with the (issue of) free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

Lastly, as not many tourists were observed interacting with the dogs and this certainly did not lead to in-depth interviews, an attempt was made to fill this knowledge-gap by analyzing reviews on TripAdvisor in order to gain more insight into tourist opinions of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

Therefore, a third research method involved a content analysis of existing online data. In order to gain an *understanding*, the (quantitative) content also has been coded through semantic analysis to study the (qualitative) *meaning* behind the words and data.

#### 3.3.1 Observations

Taking in mind the ethical aspect of human-animal encounters, the observations were planned to be held in a covert way. This would limit the chances of participants 'faking' their behaviour, causing the so called 'observer effect' (White, 2017).

Furthermore, in order to create an 'insider's view', the researcher chose to participate while observe. Hence, the method 'participant observation' was followed, with observer being the primary role (Bailey, 2007).

For time and efficiency reasons, the locations of the observations were limited to popular tourist areas within the city and island of Rhodes, with the main focus on Rhodes Town.

If interactions between people and free-roaming dogs were observed, where possible the observed actors were questioned, simultaneously changing the structure from covert to overt. Thus, the observations were semi-structured, meaning that in advance the location, timing and focus were determined, but spontaneous happenings could influence the further course of the observations.

The focus of the observations lay on the presence of free-roaming dogs and their interactions with the physical world and other actors like tourists, locals or business owners. Aspects such as behaviour, body language and verbal behaviour were taken into account during the observations (Bailey, 2007).

As it is not always visible whether a dog is owned or not, this study focused on all *free-roaming* dogs. Even if a dog has a collar, this does not necessarily mean that it is currently owned, as dogs might still have it whilst being abandoned or lost. Simultaneously, a dog without a collar does not necessarily mean it is un-owned.

Also for tourists it can be difficult to distinguish an unowned stray from a community dog or owned free-roaming dog, especially if dog behaviour in their culture differs from the holiday country. Besides, as all free-roaming dogs can cause problems in a tourism context, distinction in ownership is not defined as essential for this research.

How to study public life has been extensively described by Gehl and Svarre (2013) in their identical named book. The tools which are used for this research are discussed further below.

### Counting

According to Gehl and Svarre (2013, p. 25) counting is a common tool when studying public life. The authors argue that as a rule everything can be counted, and counting for ten minutes once an hour should provide a clear picture of the daily rhythm. This, as “city life has shown to be quite rhythmic and uniform from one day to the next, rather like a lung that breathes”. However, if the site is sparsely populated, the process of counting should be continued for a longer period of time to limit faults. The derived data will provide numbers which can be used for making comparisons between different geographic locations or over a period of time (Gehl and Svarre, 2013). In this case, this tool was used for counting the quantity of free-roaming dogs in different areas in Rhodes Town, thus sketching an image about the current situation of free-roaming dogs here.

### Mapping

Next to counting, the presence of free-roaming dogs is also visualised through the ‘mapping’ technique. By means of this tool, aspects like activities, people or objects can be located and symbolised on a map of an area, indicating geographically which activities take place and where (Gehl and Svarre, 2013). Hence, using this technique insight could be given into *where* the free-roaming dogs are within Rhodes and if there are any significant events to be linked to a specific area.

### Tracking

If human-dog encounters were witnessed, a third tool was used, namely what Gehl and Svarre (2013) define as *shadowing* or *tracking*. This means that activities of certain actors are followed in order to observe their movement over a longer period of time.

In their book this technique is described as one where the actors are usually unaware they are being observed. However, where possible the researcher also *questioned* those who interacted with free-roaming dogs in order to get insight into reasons and emotions related to these interactions.

### Keeping a diary

In addition, Gehl and Svarre (2013) mention the value of keeping a diary, as this adds details and nuances to quantitative data and therefore increases

the knowledge about human behaviour in public spaces. Therefore, all observations were written down in a notebook on spot and described more thoroughly on a laptop on the same day, in order to make sure valuable information does not get lost.

### 3.3.2 Interviews

When it comes to the interviews, a distinction can be made between unstructured interviews (where the researcher talks freely without a planning or structure), structured interviews (where the researcher asks precise questions in a specific order) or semi-structured interviews, which is a combination of both (Bailey, 2007).

In this study the choice was given to semi-structured interviews, as this ensures that questions that absolutely need an answer are not omitted. However, this method still provides space for improvisation and impulse questions based on the participant’s response (Bryman, 2012).

Although the ‘planned’ interviews were held in a semi-structured manner, spontaneous questions that took place when human-dog encounters were observed more resemble unstructured interviews. This, as these ‘interviews’ could not be planned beforehand and events that were observed could not be foreseen. Furthermore, the course of these ‘spontaneous’ interviews was depended on the willingness and the extent of which the actors in the setting were prepared to participate.

### Expert interviews

Because the management of free-roaming dogs is not a simple formula, it seemed highly relevant to collect more in-depth information about possible solutions for the problem in Rhodes.

Therefore, after interviewing the stakeholders during the field research in Rhodes, the derived data was used in order to shape a second round of interviews in the Netherlands. These interviews were held with experts from the field when it comes to dog management. Hence, by interviewing experts when it comes to dog management, the existing data could be ‘checked’ and more detailed information could be collected.

### 3.3.3 Content analysis

By means of analyzing content in the form of online reviews, extra knowledge could be gained about tourist experiences and opinions of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

Because TripAdvisor is the number one review website in the world (Chipkin, 2015) this source was chosen as a database.

As Neuendorf (2002) explains, all forms of content analysis are carried out by generating a coding scheme. Then, the researcher needs to analyse and categorise the frequency of certain words, phrases or images. As the most common method is categorising the content through the identification of themes (Botterill and Platenkamp, 2012) thematic analysis was used in order to gain insight into the most common topics mentioned in the reviews.

However, as Boterill and Platenkamp (2012, p. 43) illustrate: “the complexity of ‘meaning’ portrayed in text and image requires a more subtle phase of analysis”. Thus, as an attempt to gain a better *understanding*, after thematic analysis the reviews were also analysed by means of semantic analysis.

### Semantic content analysis

Whereas content analysis focuses more on the quantitative part of data, semantic content analysis is more concerned with the *meaning* behind the linguistics (Botterill and Platenkamp, 2012).

Instead of solely counting the frequency of words, by means of semantic analysis the relationship between individual words can be assessed (Manning and Schütze, 1999). With this method, universally coded meaning was assigned to the content (Goddard, 2013) in order to define whether the reviews had a ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ connotation regarding free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

## 3.4 Data collection and analysis

During the field research, data was collected from 20 August until 10 of September 2017 in a period of three consecutive weeks, thus creating a cross-sectional research design. Additionally, after return the expert interviews took place as well as the (semantic) content analysis. All data was analysed based on either expert guidelines or existing theories.

### 3.4.1 Observations

In order to get a complete as possible picture, observations were held on both week days as well as weekend days and at different times of the day, varying from morning to afternoon and evening. Thus, observations were held on 21, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 31 August 2017 and 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 September 2017.

The number of dogs was counted by means of direct observation and for each dog counted details were reported based on visual assessment. In order to prevent double counting, the camera on a mobile phone was used to take pictures every time a dog was spotted. Moreover, by using ‘location services’ on the smart phone, also the exact location of the dog on the map could be recorded every time a picture was taken. The full diaries can be found in appendix D.

Lastly, all observations were analysed based on expert theories and guidelines, which will be explained more thoroughly in the next chapter.

### 3.4.2 Interviews

In total 20 interviews were conducted, of which 18 in Rhodes during the field research and 2 back in the Netherlands in regards to the expert interviews. As only those with a direct connection to free-roaming dogs were questioned, the sample was based on a non-probability approach and concerns a purposive sample. This, as the researcher used existing knowledge to define which participants were relevant regarding this research (Bryman, 2012). Moreover, as this study is build on a multi-stakeholder approach, this way the researcher could ensure that there was a “good deal of variety in the resulting sample, so that sample members differ from each other in terms of key characteristics relevant to the research question” (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). Besides, when it comes to the expert interviews the participants were sampled based on their knowing expertise regarding dog management, thus being a so-called ‘expert sample’.

However, a distinction could be made when it comes to the interviews with hotels, as initially no connection with free-roaming dogs could be defined. In order to limit bias, an attempt was made to generate a representative sample by means of contacting the most popular hotels in Rhodes according to TripAdvisor (2017a). Hence, in total 86 hotels distributed throughout the island were contacted, which ultimately led to five responses. With a response rate of nearly 6% one might question the validity, as non-response errors could bias a sample’s representation (Sivo et al., 2006). Nonetheless, in this case the purpose was not to generalise a population, but rather to collect qualitative information about the possible effects of free-roaming dogs on tourism businesses and in which ways they would be willing to help.



The initial goal was to interview at least one representative of each stakeholder group. However, as government parties did not respond, no direct questions to this stakeholder could be asked. In sum, the following stakeholder groups were questioned: 3 animal welfare organisations (of which 8 individual respondents), 1 veterinarian/pet shop, 8 tourism businesses (of which 5 hotels, 2 restaurants and 1 tourist shop), 2 tourists (of which 5 individual respondents), 1 local and 2 experts. The full list of respondents can be found in appendix E. To protect the privacy of the respondents, their names are not published.

Out of the five hotels interviewed, four preferred to answer the questions via e-mail. Thus in these cases the method e-mail interviewing was performed. Moreover, one interview was carried out via Skype, as one of the experts was based in Lesbos, Greece. The rest of the interviews were conducted face to face. Furthermore, most interviews were conducted using the item schedule and item lists showcased in appendix F. When possible, the interviews were recorded, using the dictaphone app on a mobile phone, and literally transcribed. If recording was not possible, notes were taken and reported as soon as possible in order to ensure no relevant information would get lost. All transcriptions and notes are reported in appendix G.

Finally, the data was analysed by means of thematic analysis. As illustrated by Braun and Clark (2006) this has been done following six consecutive steps.

First, by means of transcribing, (re)-reading and stating initial ideas familiarizing with the data took place. Next, initial codes were generated and the data was organised into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005).

In step 3, all codes were put into possible themes, functioning as a so-called 'umbrella'. Then, in the fourth step the themes were revised in order to develop a coherent set of themes and codes. During step 5, this process was finalized by defining and naming the themes. Finally, step 6 consisted of producing the report, where a final analysis of the data was constructed, in relation to the research questions and the literature (Braun & Clark, 2006). The coding schemes of the analysis can be found in appendix H.

### 3.4.3 Content analysis

In total, 141 reviews were analyzed which consisted of 14 initial reviews and a total of 127 response posts. Data was derived from the Rhodes Forum and Greece Forum on TripAdvisor, using the key words #dog and #stray. This content was filtered, keeping only relevant posts with a connection to free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

Accordingly, the data was analysed similarly to the steps of thematic analysis as explained in the previous section. Moreover, every theme was semantically analyzed by labelling it as either 'positive' or 'negative'. The coding schemes of the content analysis are visualised in appendix I.

### 3.5 Research limitations

As limitations are often inevitable, also during this research a few limitations arose.

Firstly, since there was only the time and resources to conduct field research for one period of three consecutive weeks, this cross-sectional design automatically limits the scope of this study. Especially because the observation method was included, results could have differed if research was carried out in another period or time of the year. Nonetheless, an attempt was made to reduce this risk as much as possible by choosing a period that included both tourist high season (August) as well as tourist low(er) season (September) and by observing at different times and different days.

Secondly, the non-probability sample makes it impossible to create a representation of the entire population. Therefore, it is more difficult to generalise the research findings.

Especially in the case of the questioned hotels, the low response rate could have caused non-response errors. Moreover, the researcher was unable to directly include the stakeholder group government, as they were unavailable for an interview.

Nonetheless, an attempt was made to fill this gap by asking other interviewees about their role and attitude. Besides, the qualitative design of this research reduces the relevance of generalisation.



# Chapter 4

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The results chapter is designed to give answer to the research questions stated before.

First, the situation when it comes to free-roaming dogs in Rhodes will be explained by means of data collected through participant observation and interviews. Second, the roles and attitudes of the different stakeholders are defined, which also comes directly from participant observation as well as interviews conducted during the field research. Finally, the last research question will be answered, where both interviews with the stakeholders in Rhodes as well as expert opinions from interviews conducted in the Netherlands are included in order to define how free-roaming dogs can best be managed in Rhodes.

Citations are sourced by stating the interview number and line number of the associated transcript.

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# Results

## 4.1 What is the situation when it comes to free-roaming dogs in Rhodes?

This paragraph will evaluate all factors that are relevant in order to assess the situation in Rhodes when it comes to free-roaming dogs. The sub-questions are adapted from The International Companion Animal Management Coalition (ICAM 2007) and the report of the expert meeting by The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, World Animal Protection and Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise "G. Caporale (FAO, 2014) and thus based on expert guidelines.

### 4.1.1 Size and distribution of the dog population

In order to count the dogs, the guidelines of World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA, now called WAP) were followed, using their report 'Surveying roaming dog populations: guidelines on methodology'.

According to WSPA (2007a), a city first must be divided into non-overlapping subregions, which sometimes can be defined through already existing 'wards' or 'boroughs'. Priority areas can be chosen by means of pre-existing knowledge about the density of roaming dogs, but also other factors, like the frequency of complaints or welfare problems in certain areas can play a role in prioritisation of research areas. However, the general rule is that a block should not take longer than two hours to cover. This, as dogs are mobile creatures and the time of day may influence their 'roaming behaviour', simultaneously affecting the legitimacy of the count (WSPA, 2007a).

In this case, the city of Rhodes was divided into two main areas, namely Old Town and New Town. These two areas were prioritised, as these are the two main tourist areas and therefore most relevant for this research. Furthermore, these geographic areas were also indicated in the study of Mannhart et al. (2007) to have the highest density of dogs.

The categorisation of Old Town and New Town corresponds with the way Lynch (1960) categorises urban areas, as he defines five important elements in a map, namely: "paths which are the channels along which individuals move; barriers (e.g. rivers) separating one region from another; districts which are medium-to-large sections of the city with an identifiable character; nodes which are the strategic points in a city which the individual can enter and which serve as foci for travel and landmarks which are points of reference used in navigation and way-finding into which an individual cannot enter" (Sharma, 2004, p. 75).

In this case, the paths alongside Mandraki harbour and Kolona harbour can serve as channels to move from one region (Old Town) to the other (New Town and vice versa. As Mandraki harbour also has two popular landmarks (the statues and the windmills) these areas were also included.

Moreover, Old Town could easily be defined as one 'ward' by means of the castle walls which literally serve as borders to indicate this area. Therefore, the castle walls serve as a barrier, separating Old Town from New Town. Within these castle walls there are multiple gates to enter different parts of Old Town, which corresponds with Lynch' idea of so-called 'nodes'. Lastly, although Old Town is quite consistent when it comes to its character, New Town can be divided into multiple regions according to its function and character, namely the Nea agora (New Market) square with some tourist shops and restaurants, the commercial shopping area with universal fashion/cosmetic shops and shopping malls, one typical tourist shop/restaurant street, the hotel and resort area and the beaches in the tip of the island. The full map with its regions and subregions is visualised in image 4.1 on the next page.

Image 4.1 | Map division Rhodes Town



\*Adapted from rhodestaxitours.com

■ Kolona harbour + Mandraki harbour

■ Old Town

■ New Town

● Nea Agora Square

● Commercial shopping area

● Main tourist shop/restaurant street

● Hotel/resort area

● Beach

Furthermore, according to the protocol in the WSPA (2007a) guidelines, only dogs that are roaming free (and thus not on a leash or accompanied by an owner) on public property were included in the count.

World Society for the Protection of Animals recognises the fact that it is rather impossible to have an exact count of the number of dogs, as they are mobile and thus might move in and out across the block boundaries. Nonetheless, an estimation of the size of the dog population in Old Town and New Town has been made by means of counting all the individual dogs that have been observed during the three weeks in Rhodes. This simultaneously sketched an image of the distribution of the dogs within the defined areas, as regularly the same dogs were spotted multiple times near the same places. Moreover, by observing at different times of the day, an image has been sketched about not only where, but also *when* dogs can be seen most frequently.

*Table 4.1 | Size dog population Rhodes Town*

Initial dog count	Total: 28
Korona harbour	0
Mandraki harbour	0
Old Town	17
New Town	11
Nea Agora Square	2
Commercial shopping area	2
Main tourist shop/restaurant street	2
Hotel/resort area	5
Beach	0

In sum 28 free-roaming dogs were counted, of which the majority of 17 in Old Town and 11 in New Town. At Mandraki harbour only cats were spotted, accompanied by a sign asking for money to help feed the cats. Also at Korona harbour no dogs were seen.

In total more dogs were observed, but those that were tied on a leash or clearly belonged to an owner (albeit in the distance) were excluded from the count. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that also while walking their dog, owners often allowed their pets to roam freely.

Some dogs wandered around within Old Town and New Town and one dog was even spotted in both areas on the same day. This shows the mobility of the dogs. Nevertheless, many dogs were seen multiple times more or less around the same place. This indicates they have a certain area where they usually are, which is often nearby shops or restaurants.

### Old Town

Within Old Town there are not really specific places to be defined with a higher density of dogs, as they were spotted wandering around the whole area (see appendix J). The majority of the dogs, namely 10/17, were spotted more than once. Some of them could be found around the same area, with the two dogs at restaurant Sarris as a typical example, as they could almost always be spotted inside or in front of the restaurant.

Although the guidelines of WSPA (2007a) state that the ideal time to count dogs is generally at dawn, before garbage is picked up and before traffic fills the streets, during the morning count (06.00-08.00) Old Town looked like a ghost town as all shops and restaurants were closed. At this time there were no people and also no dogs to be spotted in this area. Most of the dogs in Old Town were observed during day-time, between sunrise and sunset.

### New Town

In New Town less dogs were spotted, and only 2/11 were seen multiple times, of which one more regularly at Nea Agora square.

In the commercial shopping area many times no dogs were seen at all, and only two dogs were spotted incidentally of all times observed here. One of these dogs was lying in front of a tattoo shop, where there was also dog food on the street.

Also in the main tourist shop/restaurant street in New Town by coincidence two dogs were spotted out of all times, of which one was lying in front of a restaurant and one walked into a shop.

Lastly, in the hotel/resort areas most dogs were spotted, however geographically this is also the largest area. One dog was spotted here two times, namely one time walking in the street in the early morning and one time at night time sleeping at the porch of a hotel. Nonetheless, also in New Town most dogs were observed during day-time, when the sun was up. No dogs (without owner) were spotted directly on the beach.



## Island Rhodes

In addition, other popular tourist places in Rhodes island as well as some villages have been observed in order to get an idea about the distribution of free-roaming dogs on the *island* of Rhodes and whether they were present in other tourist places as well. Therefore, observations were held in Lindos, the Butterfly Village (Petaloudes), the Seven Springs (Epta Piges), Old Kamiros, Filerimos, Kritinia Castle, the island Symi and the villages Skala Kamirou, Lalyssos, Arhangelos and Kalithea. In addition, also the Acropolis site of Rhodes was visited, which is just outside Old Town and New Town.

However, because the Butterfly Village and the Seven Springs are managed nature trails, Old Kamiros is a managed acropolis site and Filerimos is a monastery, dogs were not present here and in Filerimos (pet) dogs were not even allowed to enter. Furthermore, in front of Kritinia Caste only cats were spotted, but no dogs. On the island Symi one free-roaming dog was spotted at a restaurant, begging and getting fed by tourists and in the village of Lalyssos one free-roaming dog was spotted, running in the streets. In the village Arhangelos one dog was spotted alone in front of a house, but later it appeared to belong to the people living there, thus not classifying as free-roaming dog in this case. In Kalithea there was a sign for the Municipality shelter, in front of the cat house of Kalithea which is near the tourist site 'the Springs of Kalithea', but no dogs were spotted here as well. In Lindos, which is the most popular tourist place after Rhodes Town (TripAdvisor, 2017b), one free-roaming dog was spotted, running in the street and entering a tourist shop. After a conversation with the shop owner it became clear that the dog belonged to him and his daughter, but first it was a stray dog. However, because (pet) dogs were never really popular by the people in Lindos, the shop owner reasoned that is why there has never been a problem with stray dogs in Lindos. This statement is confirmed by two hotels, stating "Our hotel is in Lindos and you can rarely see a free-roaming dog here" (I12: 4) and "In the area of Lindos, where we are located, there are almost only stray cats" (I11: 9-10). However, the shop owner argued that with the arrival of foreigners to Lindos, keeping dogs as a pet became more and more popular or as he stated "fashionable" (I15: 12-13). Nonetheless, the problem in Lindos mostly seems to lay with the donkeys that are used for tourist rides.

Lastly, at the Acropolis of Rhodes also no dogs were spotted.

A visualisation of the distribution of the dogs on the maps can be found in appendix J.

### 4.1.2 Welfare issues

In order to examine the welfare of the free-roaming dogs observed in Rhodes, suggested indicators by ICAM (2015) were used, assessing the body condition, skin condition, interactions with other dogs or humans and (specific) illness or injury. Furthermore, additional information was gathered by stating whether the dogs were wearing a collar or not.

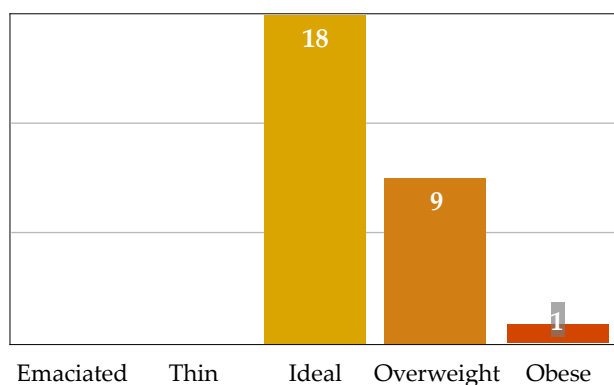
#### Body condition score

According to the Guidance Document of ICAM (2015) body condition can be assessed through solely observation and because there is no need for physical examination it is relatively safe and quick to assess. The given score is based on body fat coverage, so not on 'coat health' or any injuries. Therefore, it displays the extent and quality of food resources available for these dogs.

In addition, multiple studies showcased an increase in body condition score as a result of veterinary interventions such as neutering or basic veterinary health care (e.g. Sankey et al., 2012; Steinberger, 2012; Totton et al., 2011; Yoak et al., 2014).

Out of the different scoring systems available, ICAM recommends a 5-point scoring system ranging from emaciated (1) to obese (5) as this is easy to learn and adapt and increases 'observer reliability'. Therefore, the 28 dogs observed in Old Town and New Town were given a body condition score of the following scale: (1 = Emaciated; 2 = Thin; 3 = Ideal; 4 = Overweight; 5 = Obese). As a further guidance, the examples with pictures in the ICAM document were used (see appendix K).

Figure 4.1 | Body condition score (N=28)



Out of the 28 dogs, the majority of 18 (64%) were indicated to have an ideal body condition, followed by 9 (32%) dogs that seemed to be overweight. No dogs in Old Town or New Town were emaciated or thin by showing ribs, and one dog (4%) was even found to be obese.

Perhaps not completely coincidental is the fact that the dogs that are usually in or near the restaurant Sarris in Old Town were found to be the most fat, with one of them even being obese. An explanation for this could lie in them getting fed by the restaurant (and people eating here).

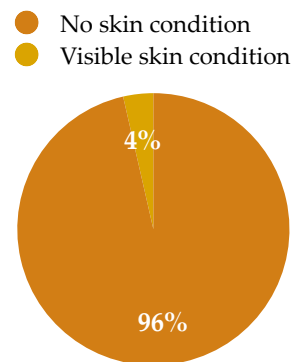
Furthermore, the high level of dogs that seemed to be overweight could also be an indication that they are neutered, which some respondents also stated during the interviews (I4: 114-120; I7: 75).

### **🐾 Skin condition score**

Although skin conditions can have various causes, while using the skin condition as a welfare indicator, determining the cause is according to ICAM (2015) not necessary. A skin condition is an indicator for poor welfare due to discomfort of the skin itself, but it can also reflect underlying health issues. Furthermore, also with this welfare indicator physical examination is not required and visible skin conditions can be assessed through observation alone.

According to the guidelines, a visible skin condition contains “any sign of hair loss or scaly, inflamed or sore skin but does not include dirty fur, elbow keratosis (thickened skin at the elbows), skin tumours or hernias” (ICAM, 2015, p.15). The easiest scoring system is based on the (non)-appearance of a visible skin condition and this has been successfully implemented in different studies in the past (e.g. Garde et al. (2012) in Chile; Sankey et al. (2012) in Sri Lanka; and Totton et al. (2011) in India). In this case, the indicator is the percentage of adult dogs with a noticeable skin condition. Although it is possible to assess the skin conditions by means of severity and therefore using a scale ranging from e.g. (1) no skin condition, (2) mild skin condition and (3) severe skin condition, this demands more training to make sure observers can reliably score a mild case from a severe case. Therefore, ICAM (2015) recommends in their guidance document to assess this welfare indicator by means of simply stating the presence or absence of a skin condition.

Figure 4.21 Skin condition score (N=28)



From the 28 observed dogs in Rhodes Town only 1 had a visible skin condition, which was both visible through scaly skin, but also by the way the dog was scratching itself repeatedly. The latter could be an indicator for underlying causes or perhaps flees, however this is not assessed.

Nonetheless, 96% of the dogs in Old Town and New Town seemed to have a healthy skin condition. However, it is worth mentioning that one free-roaming dog that was spotted *outside of the defined area* (more south in Rhodes Town) also had a visible skin condition, which seemed to look more severe (see appendix D, page 69).

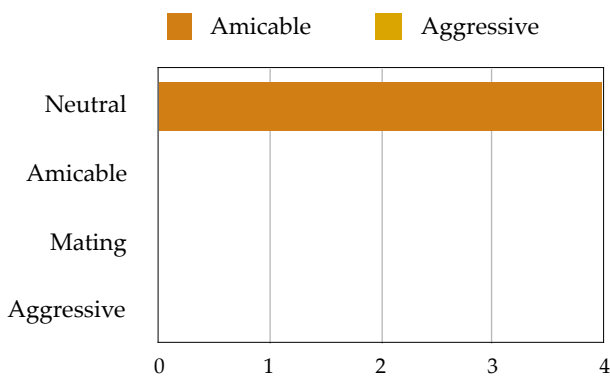
### **🐾 Dog-dog interactions**

A third welfare indicator adapted from the Guidance Document of ICAM (2015) is related to dog-dog interactions. This, as the social behaviour of animals can be an indicator for their welfare for the reason that it can either display their underlying emotional state (e.g. fear underlying aggression or relaxation leading to play behaviour) but it can also be a welfare problem of its own when injuries are a direct effect of fighting behaviour.

Also this indicator can be measured by means of direct observation. The standard protocol for the assessment consists of observation of the roaming dogs and scoring all social interactions between dogs regarding to their ‘outcome’, being either amicable, neutral, mating or aggressive. Although the behaviour of dogs can have a different intention in the beginning, it is the final outcome of the interaction that should be recorded. Therefore, “the indicators are the percentage of amicable interactions and the percentage of aggressive interactions out of the total of all dog-dog interactions recorded” (ICAM, 2015, p. 18).

As a further guidance, the given examples of the different behaviour categories were consulted (see appendix K).

Figure 4.3 | Dog-dog interaction score (N=4)



In total four dog interactions were observed during all observations in the three weeks in Rhodes. All interactions included dogs sniffing each other, of which two times followed by the dogs walking a small distance together. Therefore, 100% of the interactions were amicable of nature and non were aggressive. However, when looking at the descriptions given by ICAM (2015, p. 107), these interactions fall under the category 'neutral', as it included sniffing behaviour with limited body language and an approach and retreat, with the dogs being "not aggressive but also not affiliative".

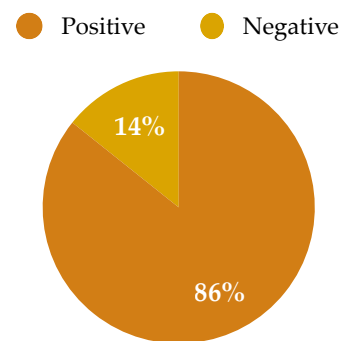
### Human-dog interactions

Also the behaviour of humans towards dogs can influence its welfare, either in a positive or a negative way. If people repeatedly throw stones or shout at dogs, even if the intent is to create distance and not necessarily to harm the dog, this can ultimately lead to dogs becoming afraid of people. Because roaming dogs are almost always amongst people, a high level of fear can have a direct negative effect on the welfare through the development of constant stress. On the other hand, repeated interaction of friendliness between people and dogs, like feeding or petting, can actually reduce anxiety and stress and therefore have a positive impact on the dogs welfare. Besides reflecting on welfare, this indicator simultaneously displays the public perception and tolerance of dogs.

Because recording all behaviours of humans towards dogs in a busy place full of people and roaming dogs can be difficult, ICAM suggests only including the extremes of human behaviour, being either positive

(like feeding a dog) or negative (like hitting a dog). Therefore the indicators are "the percentage of positive human behaviours and the percentage of negative human behaviours out of total of all 'extremes' of human-dog interactions" (ICAM, 2015, p.19). However, following the examples in the recording sheet of ICAM (see appendix K, page 260) the percentage of 'relaxed behaviour' is also included, reflecting upon whether the dogs avoided the researcher's ('unfamiliar human') approach or not.

Figure 4.4 | Human-dog interaction score pos/neg (N=14)



In total 14 (extreme) interactions were observed, of which the bulk had a positive character (86%) and merely two of all interactions were negative (14%). Out of the twelve positive interactions, 7 included people petting a dog, 4 consisted of a person calling a dog (in a friendly way) and 1 time a dog was given something to drink out of the public water fountain. When it comes to the negative interactions, one time an older man who was working in the street shouted at a dog and one time a waiter clapped his hands, signing two dogs at the restaurant to leave. However, it should be noted that the latter was at the restaurant Sarris which, as mentioned before, has kind of become a home base for the two dogs. Although the negative interactions only came from locals, both tourists as locals (a.o. shop owners and waiters) interacted positively with the dogs. Besides local workers, one time also passengers recognised a dog by (enthusiastic) calling its name (in Greek).

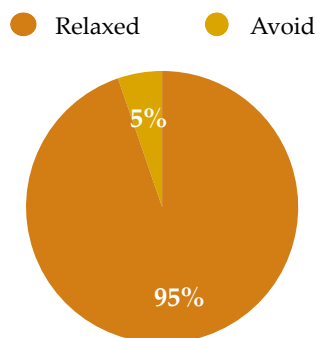
Other ways in which people showed their (lack of) tolerance was by shaking their head when a dog passed by or by waving at a dog, however this did not have a direct effect on the welfare of the dog and therefore it is not an 'extreme negative interaction'. The same counts for the two times people were spotted taking a picture of a dog passing by, as this also is not a direct interaction with the dog.



Lastly, two times people were observed who purposely avoided a dog, by taking a step back when it walked by, and by telling a child not to touch the dog. Both cases involved the one dog in New Town with the observable skin condition.

In addition, outside of the research area (on the island Symi) one free-roaming dog was spotted being fed by tourists, counting as a positive interaction.

Figure 4.5 | Approach behaviour relaxed/avoid (N=38)



As sometimes the same dog was seen multiple times, this indicator shows all unique approaches where the researcher was “one dog length” or “directly over the top of a dog” (ICAM, 2015, p. 108). The double count of approaches with the same dogs can be justified by the fact that dog behaviour can differ over time and is subsidiary to external factors like for instance hunger or tiredness.

Only two times a dog avoided the approach by walking away. Hence, the majority of the dogs (95%) showed ‘extreme relaxed behaviour’, mostly by ignoring the researcher getting close and walk besides them and occasionally by allowing to be pet.

Two dogs that were walking together even approached the researcher (instead of the other way around).

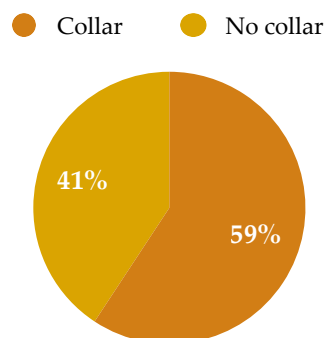
However, one dog walked away when the researcher intended to pet it, and one dog moved from one place to another (few metres further) when the researcher got closer. However, the same dog allowed to be pet a week later when he was lying down in the restaurant and ignored the approach other times. This showcases the changeability of dog behaviour. Nonetheless, the majority of the free-roaming dogs in Old Town and New Town are not shy of humans and showed ‘extreme relaxed behaviour’.

## 🐾 Collar

For identification purposes it is generally suggested for dogs to wear a collar, especially if they are allowed to roam free (WAP, 2015; ICAM, 2007). However, in Rhodes Town it can also be an indicator that the dog is neutered (I7: 66; I18: 29-30), or perhaps it was owned in the past. Therefore, a collar will not indicate whether a dog is (un)owned and vice versa; a dog without a collar does not mean that it has no owner.

Nonetheless dogs with collars might give a different perception than dogs without a collar, as visitors might think that a collar equals ownership and therefore it is cared for and even less aggressive (e.g. Strickland, 2015).

Figure 4.6 | Collar (N=27)



As one dog ran too fast and it was dark, no conclusion could be made whether it was wearing a collar or not. Therefore, this dog is left out of this count.

Out of the remaining 27 dogs in Old Town and New Town 59% was wearing a collar, relative to 41% that was spotted without a collar. No distinction can be made between the two areas, as in Old Town 10/16 was wearing a collar and 6/10 not and in New Town 6/11 wore a collar and 5/11 did not.

Although the amount of dogs among them that is neutered and/or has an owner is hereby not clarified, it may give an overall perception to visitors. Thus, in this case a perception that almost half of the dogs (41%) do either not have an (responsible) owner or are strays that are not neutered.

### **Specific illness or injury**

According to ICAM (2015) specific diseases or injuries could be linked to certain destinations by being prevalent or even unique. Therefore, special attention needs to be given to these illnesses during an intervention. Although the free-roaming dogs in Old Town and New Town could not be assessed for specific diseases, by means of their body condition and skin condition they had an overall 'healthy' look. This is confirmed by several respondents, stating: *"the dogs that are in the city, they are doing quite OK, those street dogs. They are being taken care of by people and... eh... they do not really have a bad life (I1: 95-96) and "In Rhodes Town, they know the strays that they are castrated, that someone is looking after them, especially in the center (I4: 119-120).*

However, interviews at the different shelters pointed out that the dogs that are found outside of the defined area are usually not completely healthy and frequently suffer from a specific illness or injuries, as *"most of the animals are hungry, they are eh, not good on the health" (I8: 3-4).*

The most common diseases which the dogs in the shelters have are leishmania (I1: 275; I6: 15), which is a blood disease transferred by a parasite, and lichia (ehrlichiosis) (I1: 274), which is another infectious disease brought over by ticks. Especially the treatment for leishmania is very expensive (I6: 506). Besides, as the dogs are often not vaccinated, dogs covered in fleas and ticks is not unusual in Rhodes (I3: 44; I6: 114).

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*"The street dogs... Mostly they have lichia [ehrlichiosis]. If we test on that then, but you also see that in the shelter, almost every dog that gets tested... then you do a blood test and usually it shows that they have lichia. And we hope then that they do not have leishmania.*

*But they are the biggest concerns here yes. And the street dogs I think also, most of them have lichia for sure."*

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*- H. from Rhodes Animal Welfare Society (I1: 272-276)*

Furthermore, besides specific illnesses sometimes dogs have to be treated because they have injuries like a broken leg or hip: *"We have them for different reasons you know, the very sick ones you know or, the ones with broken bones..." (I6: 360-361) often caused by traffic accidents (I4: 569; I5: 47-48).*

The fact that these accidents happen can be confirmed by participant observation, as on 23 August 2017 an injured dog was brought to the municipality Shelter as it had been hit by a car (see appendix L).

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**"Accidents happen. Many times they do nothing and just hit the animal and drive further."**

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*- M from Stray Gang (I4: 569)*

Lastly, other cases showed very thin and emaciated dogs coming to the shelter, as several respondents mentioned: *"If you see what we had arrive here...I mean if you shave that one we got...or the right down the front, if you shaved his fur off and you saw how thin he was, you can see his hip bones sticking out. They are skeletons when they come here" (I6: 265-268) or "... finally we could take the dog from the street and save it, because it was on the edge of dying, it was only bones and skin, the poor dog" (I8: 269-271).*

Therefore, there is a clear difference when it comes to the health of the dogs spotted in Rhodes Town and those which are found outside this area.

### **4.1.3 Problems that the dogs cause**

The free-roaming dogs in Rhodes could cause various problems, which could be summarised by the themes: nuisance, safety and public health, destination image and economy and livestock predation.

#### **Nuisance**

Various respondents mentioned that dogs could be a nuisance for businesses like hotels or restaurants and often these businesses are annoyed (I1: 114; I8: 561) because *"they are afraid that they eat the food" (I6 : 608) or cause problems for their guests (I2: 94-97).* This is especially an issue for *"businesses that offer food" as "in Greece, a lot of restaurants are outside, so it is easy for the animals to approach" (I8: 227-228).* Therefore, the animals often beg for food, like one respondent described: *"I keep seeing fatty cats and sometime[s] dogs coming begging for food from the tables in the restaurants next door" (I9: 26-27).*

If not appreciated, begging behaviour can be seen as a nuisance as one respondent stated: *"we have this dog, he is coming every day in the restaurant, but now people are complaining" (I8: 248-249).*

Moreover, due to sanitary reasons animals are not allowed inside restaurants by Greek law and, if not obeyed, this could also lead to complaints (I20: 674-676).

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*“People who are not afraid of animals, they love animals, they feed them, so that makes the animal want to go back and other people are afraid or disgust or whatever and for sure this can be a problem.”*

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- Board manager Atrium Hotel (I8: 228-230)

Also while observing occasionally begging behaviour has been noticed. Moreover, barking has also been mentioned by two respondents (I5: 23; I8: 365) and this too can create nuisance, especially if *“a dog...is barking all night”* (I5: 23).

Finally, through the observations it became clear that here and there you can see feces on the streets. Although, it is not clear whether these come from the stray cats or free-roaming dogs, or the reason is due to owners who simply do not clean up after their pets. Nonetheless, begging, barking and fouling can be seen as a nuisance that can create problems for locals as well as tourists and also tourism businesses can be annoyed by the dogs.

### **Safety and public health**

The free-roaming dogs in Rhodes can also cause problems for the safety and health of the people living or visiting here. For starters, two respondents indicated dogs biting tourists. However, one of them argued he never actually saw a dog biting tourists and businesses *“always say like that, but when I go there okay I see a dog, that’s searching you know to eat”* (I2: 96-97). Nonetheless one dog in the municipality shelter is there because of this reason (I3: 58).

That dogs can be violent was confirmed by another respondent, who added: *“There are wild dogs out there, you know dogs that are hungry, there are dogs that are sick. They are going to attack people. They are going to attack people with other dogs, because they go after the dog”* (I8: 199-205).

Secondly, free-roaming dogs can cause traffic accidents, which does not only affect the well-being of the dog, but it can be dangerous for humans as well as for instance *“[on] the motorbike...you could fall down”* (I6: 762).

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*“We had some incidents here in the hotel. Once we found a Pitbull down at the pool... Straight away put him on the leash, because people are afraid of Pitbulls, as you can imagine.”*

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- Board manager Atrium Hotel (I8: 92-102)

Lastly, besides attacks and traffic accidents free-roaming dogs can also generate fear, either because people are *“generally afraid of dogs”* (I8: 133) or because they are afraid that *“the animals have diseases”* (I8: 140; I17: 12).

Furthermore, one local lady originally from Germany stated: *“I want a dog myself, in my house, like we know in ‘our’ countries. But I am afraid for the other dogs outside, how they will behave. I would rather have a dog back home in Germany”* (I18: 15-16).

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*“The other time with this problem, people who had the problem, the Russian person was shouting if the dog bit[e]s my kid, I will destroy you. The people did not want to get out of the taxi. Nobody should be afraid of the dog\* because we have all the documentation that the dog is vaccinated. But it could have been a stray dog. Maybe a dog that was afraid, so if you are afraid and the dog is afraid then...maybe there would not be a very nice outcome in the end.”*

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- Board manager Atrium Hotel (I8: 325-347)

\* The dog is a rescue dog, taken in and cared for by the hotel staff

However, not everyone is afraid, as one respondent mentioned: *“There have [been] occasions whereby guests have felt nervous around street dogs but for the most part they are welcomed”* (I10: 4-5). Besides, the dogs in Rhodes Town *“are very friendly”* and *“they are not aggressive dogs”* (I7: 79) which can be confirmed by the observations as no aggressive or violent dogs were spotted in Old Town or New Town.

### **Destination image and economy**

Next to nuisance and safety issues the free-roaming dogs in Rhodes can cause problems for its destination image and economy. This, as multiple respondents described tourists being shocked or devastated, which is expressed by statements like *“Yes and they are always very emotional. Yeah they think it is horrible. At least we get a little bit used to it maybe, but a tourist who comes here and sees these things...”* (I1: 75-76) and *“The tourists, when they come here, they are shocked, from what they see. Because they see stray animals, everywhere”* (I4: 268-269).

According to one respondent *“this [stray dogs] is a problem for Greece that exists for many years and it only escalates with tourists because...a lot of people that are interested in animal welfare and they see all these strays here and think ‘oh what is going on’ and they make an issue out of it”* (I8: 158-161).

It even leads to some tourists saying they do not want to go back to Rhodes *“because they do not want to see the situation here”* (I4: 307) and *“some are crying for days. They paid 2,000 euros for their holiday and then spend half of their time feeding the animals, or they see a hotel owner that tied a dog down or it is barking all night...”* (I5: 21-23).

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### **“People come here for vacation, not to see sick animals.”**

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- N. from Stray Gang (I5: 111)

On the other hand, one respondent argued that she did not think *“the problem, at least here in Rhodes...is so big, that they actually see so many...okay, sometimes you will find this dogs that are sick, abandoned and stuff like this, [but] I do not think it is so many that it is actually easy for the tourists to see them. Because sometimes they are in the villages, away from touristic places”* and she *“haven’t met anybody that would say I will not come back because of this”* (I8: 277-284). The sentiment that outside of Rhodes Town the chance is higher for tourists to get shocked is confirmed by two respondents, stating: *“if you look here in the city then... if you go outside of the city, if you go touring, then you still see so many dogs just tied, while they, well [tied] to a tree or in a barrel”* (I1: 76-78) and *“we have some problems with stray dogs outside of the, the villages”* (I7: 80).

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### **“Of course it is a problem. Most of the people are working only this season time.”**

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- M. from Stray Gang (I4: 329)

#### **Livestock predation**

Another pattern that could be translated into a theme was the term ‘livestock predation’.

Several respondents mentioned dogs looking for food and thereby *“taking one small sheep”* (I2: 67) which *“is difficult as there are shepherds around”* and *“even if the dog will not go near the sheeps and goats, they [are] afraid that it might happen”* (I4: 176).

#### **4.1.4 The source of new dogs entering into existing dog populations**

The main source of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes can be linked to irresponsible ownership, which is only triggered by the economic crisis. Besides, access to resources and a warm climate increase the survival rate of these dogs, therefore resulting in the animals multiplying more.

#### **Irresponsible dog ownership**

For starters, when asked why there are so many free-roaming dogs in Rhodes, many respondents answered by saying the people do not sterilise or castrate their dog (I1: 10; I4: 32-34; I6: 647; I8: 23; I18: 16) because *“people do not understand they have to sterilise their animals...not only for not having puppies, for their health too”* (I4: 32-34) and *“a lot of people think they interfere with the life of the animal”* (I8: 24-25). Then, the dogs are frequently allowed to roam free (I3: 48-49).

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### **“They do not make sure they neuter the dog when they keep them so afterwards, they multiply so much and then the whole problem gets out of hand, completely.”**

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- Board manager Atrium Hotels (I8: 25-27)

Consequently, if people get their own dog pregnant they often do not want to keep the puppies and dump them on the streets (I4: 39; I8: 14) in front of the shelters (I1: 12-13; I4: 39; I5: 42-43; I8: 36), in the forest (I4: 161-162; I8: 14-15), at the beach (I4: 289; I6: 212), outside of the airport (I4: 293) or even in the garbage (I2: 88-89; I3: 38; I6: 662) or in the water (I2: 90).

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### **“All these dogs they are abandoned dogs. Here they put you know, they let a mother with puppies, like that. To die. Without food, without water... Because they don’t want the dogs. They are boring of the dogs, maybe... So, they throw it. How many times we found, not here only, in other, inside the garbage. Puppies. Inside the box, closed in the garbage. Yesterday we took three puppies...they throw it in the water.”**

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- G. from Rhodes Animal Welfare Society (I2: 79-90)

Another motive for people to abandon their dogs is because they are *“bored of the dog”* (I2: 16; I4: 40; I8: 13) which frequently happens after impulse pet purchases for children (I4: 52-54; I6: 907-908; I8: 7-9).



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*“And in the long run when they see after one, two, three years, the kids get bored of the dog, parents do not want to deal with the dog, off you go in the streets. Or tied out in the middle of the forest, or whatever.”*

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- Board manager Atrium Hotel (I8: 13-15)

Therefore, amongst the free-roaming dogs there are also purebred dogs, as respondents stated *“He has got a tattoo in his ear so he is from a breeder. So we think he has been sent here for breeding but they mistreated him and slung him out”* (I6: 11-13) or *“you see a lot of dogs as you can see they are not from, originally from the street, dogs you buy in places...because people have this mentality that if you pay 500 euros it is a better dog than if you just [pay] 5 euros or find him on the street”* (I8: 581-587).

In addition, hunters add to the problem *“because when the hunter does not want the dog, he just abandons him on the mountain”* (I4: 60-61) or *“they lose the dogs there hunting...in the forest”* (I7: 84-87) and while *“you do not need ten dogs to go for hunting...they take ten so they can choose. [So if a dog] is not good...[it] can go away...”* (I4: 355-357).

Therefore, a lot can be linked to the mentality of the people living in Rhodes and *“as long as the mentality of some of the population continues being one of not caring for animals, abusing them and abandoning them without any consequences or moral repercussions”* according to one respondent *“the problem cannot truly come to an end”* (I11: 7-9).

### **Economic crisis**

A factor which triggers the problem of free-roaming dogs in Greece is the economic crisis. Three interviews pointed out that *“people leave their dogs, now especially that the crisis is now...and you do not know if they are homeless, because they still have the collar on”* (I3: 39-40) and therefore *“the problem is getting worse after the crisis, because a lot of people... they left their dogs on the streets after they could not take care of the dogs... anymore”* (I8: 5-7). As a result, they do not have the financial resources to sterilise or castrate their dog (I6: 574).

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*“To tell you the truth it has been an improvement in mentality, but not in the numbers of stray dogs, because it was this very big increase of strays because of the crisis.”*

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- Board manager Atrium Hotel (I8: 575-576)

### **Increased survival rate**

Another (indirect) reason why there are so many free-roaming dogs in Rhodes could be linked to the fact that there is a warm climate in Greece. This way, *“they do not die in the winter and [they] have more opportunity to reproduce”* (I5: 5). As a matter of fact due to the warmer climate also their instinct to reproduce increases (I5: 6-9).

In addition, while participant observing it became clear that in different ways access to resources makes it easier for the strays to survive.

For starters, the garbage on the streets indicates deficient waste management and an opportunity for strays to feed themselves, which in this case the cats noticeably did (see appendix D, page 22). Besides, several people were spotted feeding the animals, and one time a lady gave a free-roaming dog something to drink from the public water fountain. Finally, also the bowls of water and food here and there (appendix D, pages 18, 23, 33 & 39) indicate human help for the strays to drink and feed themselves, thus making it easier to survive and multiply (if they are not neutered).

### **4.1.5 Current (un)official activities to control the dog population**

In order to control the dog population in Rhodes animal welfare organisations were established and every year neuter programmes take place. There is a no-kill policy and although officially, rules and regulations have been made to protect animals, practice shows they are not always maintained.

### **Animal welfare organisations**

In total there are four animal welfare organisations in Rhodes, each with their own shelter. However, one of them (Rhodes Animal Welfare Society) belongs to the municipality shelter and therefore they *“get every four months 20,000 euros. Or something like that”* (I6: 423). The other three organisations, Stray Gang, Paws & Claws and Lucky Paws are *“people who just make groups together [and] try to save animals if they can”* (I8: 37-38). As they work on voluntary basis they *“survive purely on donation”* (I6: 406).

The municipality shelter employs one Greek man (who leads the shelter) and creates jobs for one Finnish (young) lady and two Dutch ladies. However, because the shelter is in possession of the municipality a lady from (and elected by) the municipality has the final say.

The shelter also goes by the name 'Rhodes Animal Welfare Society', which at the same time is a community on Facebook run by a lady in the UK. Stray Gang consists of five ladies originally from Rhodes, of which each have their own (part of the) shelter. Next, at Paws & Claws three ladies are volunteering, all originally from different countries, namely the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. Lastly also Lucky Paws has foreign origin as it was co-founded by an Italian lady, living in Rhodes. These organisations have their own Facebook page as well, where they try to promote the strays and ask for donations.

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**“We are only five persons. And we foster about seventy, eighty dogs. We work as well, as you can see. So when we are finished we have to go, to feed them, to look after them.”**

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- M. from Stray Gang (I4: 22-28)

Especially Paws & Claws appears to be a well organized charity as “a lot of customs go on” and they do “videos, walking, find out if they [the dogs] can get around with cats, everything. So these people [who adopt] know what they are getting” (I6: 88-89). Moreover, Paws & Claws work closely with other organisations in Germany, where almost all the dogs end up. Because they “do not trust anybody” the organisation “rarely re-homes in Greece” (I6: 252 & 78-79).

As they describe themselves: “...in Germany we have our, eh our network of ladies from Hamburg to Munich and they do all the home-checks. They greet the dogs at the airport with the families, they find the foster carers, okay, so, very good network...And every year they come to see the dogs. Our network to be quite honest is very professional for a small little charity” (I6: 64-74). Without a home-check the dogs will not be placed and usually after a dog is adopted the volunteers back in Germany arrange follow-up meetings as well. Furthermore, besides the shelter in Rhodes Town, Paws & Claws has a kennel in Afandou where all adopted dogs are walked and bathed and fully prepared to fly to their new homes (142-147).

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**“Our home-checks, they usually check twice all the families spoken to and then you have to follow-up when the dog goes to the house. It is not just bye-bye.”**

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- S. from Paws & Claws (I6: 227-228)

When it comes to Lucky Paws, “the good thing is, they also have legal presentation...because they have lawyers. They can go [somewhere] and make sure they take the dog with papers from the district attorney” (I8: 63-69).

In fact, Lucky Paws was the first animal welfare organisation in Rhodes and Paws & Claws and Lucky Paws used to be one organisation. However, because there was a misunderstanding between the main people, the two organisations split (I8: 54-59). Like a lady from the group Stray Gang describes: *We all have [a] different way of thinking, and doing things. And, you know if too many people are together, they are arguing... We help each other and that's okay.*” (I4: 211-212).

Hence, although the animal welfare organisations cannot truly work together due to arguments and different ways of working, occasionally they still help each other out if needed. As a lady from Paws & Claws explains: “Of course if we have a flight spare, of course we will share it...We share flights with the municipality shelter and Lucky Paws. Or we help each other in other ways. G[...] from the municipality shelter helps for example if there are dogs that are difficult. Or with a Greek lady who was very upset, he went and talked to her and it helped. He is great!” (I6: 183-190) However, they cannot work with Stray Gang anymore as “Stray Gang is always late and this upsets the flight partners” and “last year two partners even left because of that, which is really bad [as] these people are important” (I6: 181-183). Nonetheless, according to Stray Gang they “have very good relations with the organisations” and they “have no problem” (I4: 201-202).

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**“Of course, the best thing should be to be one, and be all the people together. But...I think this is a little bit difficult to happen. We all have a different way of thinking, and doing things.”**

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- M. from Stray Gang (I4: 202-211)

Despite the fact that the municipality shelter gets money from the municipality, many argue that it is still not enough. The shelter is overcrowded and as one respondent stated: “the help we have from the municipality is very small you know. It is for...maybe 100 animals. But now actually we have 347. This shelter was built for take one hundred animals. And now there [are] three hundred...almost fifty” (I2: 34-35). The fact that overcrowded shelters are a common phenomena in Rhodes has been made clear by respondents stating: “It is not always easy because every, all the organisations are always full” (I4: 315-316) and “we have like a small shelter also, it is always full...” (I8: 40).



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“You have a very big place from the state, it is from the public, it is like a shelter here from the public services...which they have cages...It is just a few cages with animals inside. Just to put some animals that when they found them sick or anything, that they care of them, they put them there and they try to find adoptions for them...this is full capacity now. They accepted 300 dogs, that is it. People are still going and drop dogs outside...”

- Board manager Atrium Hotel (I8: 31-36)

Volunteering and participant observation in the shelters confirmed the fact that the shelters are overfull and there is lack of facilities to take (proper) care of all dogs. Especially the municipality shelter has not enough food and drinking bowls and often multiple dogs have to eat and drink out of the same broken bucket. Due to the lack of space, there are sometimes ten dogs in one cage (see appendix L).

Therefore, all the animal welfare organisations depend on the help of volunteers and donations, which often come from abroad. As one respondent mentions “The [municipality] shelter up there, they are always begging for food for the dogs...and thank God there are volunteers...thank God that there are people that come from abroad and go up to the shelter and give money and give food...” (I4: 333-335). Besides money and food, also supplies like micro-chips get donated, often by organisations from other countries (I6: 449-450).

However, a lady from Paws & Claws argued that the government “could also offer the private organisations some money” as they “are doing a lot of work and even take dogs from the municipality shelter, if they have a ‘difficult’ dog” (I6: 475-510).

Nonetheless, many respondents agree that with the arrival of the animal welfare organisations in the period of 2011/2012 the situation of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes has improved (I1: 17-18; I4: 365; I5: 90; I6: 822-836; I7: 30-31; I8: 527-528; I17: 10-11) and thanks to them “every year thousands of animals get neutered” (I5: 98-99).

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“It is much better than twenty years ago. Now we have plenty of operations of stray animals. The animal welfare, they manage that.”

- Pet shop owner (I7: 30-31)

Especially the situation in the municipality shelter has improved the last two years, due to a change in the management and the arrival of G[...] who now leads the shelter and “really cares about the dogs” (I5: 99-101). Furthermore, since recently many connections have been established with other European countries and many dogs from Rhodes go to Germany, the UK or Scandinavian countries like Finland (I4: 95-96; I6: 58-59; I8: 44-45).

For an impression of the different shelters, see appendix L.

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“The good thing is now the last years you see people trying to do something. I think that is a difference”

- Board manager Atrium Hotel (I8: 527-528)

### Neuter programs

Besides the help of the different animal welfare groups, also vets from abroad are voluntarily dealing with the situation of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes. Since the last few years a neuter program has been established and “two times a year vets come from Germany and they sterilise the street dogs” (I1: 11). After that, the dogs are often put back on the streets, but “at least they are neutered” (I8: 87).

### No kill policy

When asked about mass killings, one respondent answered by saying: “No. At least, we are not in this point yet. There are four organisations on the island, the one is at the shelter, Stray Gang and two others. Imagine that at the shelter there are 350 dogs, we have around 70-80 and the other two organisations [also] around this. And there are still strays...” (I4: 78-80).

Furthermore, a general service like in other countries - that collects the dogs from the streets, put them in shelters and kills them if they do not get adopted after a period of time - is also absent in Rhodes (I8: 16-18). However, if this is for better or for worse, the respondent did not know.

Officially also laws should ensure that the dog population is controlled. Yet, practice shows these are not always followed, partly due to lack of law enforcement from the authorities. However, this will be discussed in the next paragraph when describing the role and attitude of the government and municipality.

## 4.2 What are the roles and attitudes of the different stakeholders?

This paragraph will assess the various roles and attitudes the different stakeholder groups have regarding the free-roaming dogs in Rhodes. Besides differences amongst stakeholders, sometimes also within stakeholder groups discrepancies are found.

### 4.2.1 Animal Welfare Organisations

Through carrying out various tasks, the animal welfare organisations, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, take up a lot of responsibility in order to solve the issue of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes. As a matter of fact, all of the charities feel that they have too much responsibility and they need help from others.

#### Roles

The animal welfare organisations have different roles in which they contribute to improve the situation of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

For starters, they shelter many dogs that were found on the streets. These are often the “severe cases” (I1: 194-196), namely the ones that are “wounded or sick or very thin” (I8: 40). Consequently, the organisations provide treatments for the animals to recover from illnesses or injuries (I1: 200; I8: 44; I11: 5-7). Moreover, as mentioned before they stimulate the neutering of thousands of animals (I5: 98-99).

Once the dogs are treated and recovered, the ultimate goal is to find permanent homes for the animals, “mostly abroad” (I8: 44-45).

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**“It is a sad fact and unfortunately not entirely controllable. There are several organisations which (as much as they can handle) take in stray animals, keep them off the road, find new homes and cure them...”**

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- Operations manager Caesar’s Gardens Hotel & Spa (I11: 5-7)

In order to finance everything (and being less dependent on donations), the animal welfare organisations found ways to collect money. This is for instance being done by selling things or organising events like lotteries (I8: 182-183). Furthermore, money collecting boxes have been made and distributed in different places, including hotels (I8: 380-382), a pet shop (see appendix D, page 49) restaurant To Marouli in Old Town (see appendix D, page 52) and a tourist shop in Faliraki (I5: 18-19).

Raising money this way has been made easier by the fact that the owner of restaurant To Marouli is simultaneously the co-founder of Lucky Paws, the board manager of Atrium Hotel is a member of this charity as well and a member of Stray Gang spends her evenings working in a tourist shop in Faliraki.

Lastly, another role the animal welfare organisations took upon is visiting schools and trying to teach children “that they should love and take care of animals” (I5: 81-82). However, this did not always work out the way they intended, as a member of Paws & Claws once went to a local school and proposed to bring some dogs but she got laughed at instead (I6: 543-544). Nevertheless, sometimes it did have a positive impact, as a different school welcomed another member of Paws & Claws when she took a puppy there and “they [even] gave a paper to all the parents... to bring some food” (I6: 566-567).

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**“Until last year we were going to schools and we were talking to them, about animals, about the castration. And they loved animals but the problem is that the parents do not want the animals.”**

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- M. from Stray Gang (I4: 46-48)

#### Too much responsibility

Because the shelters are already overcrowded, the organisations ‘cannot take in every dog’ (I1: 194). Actually, the animal welfare organisations have the feeling that more people should take responsibility and they need more help from others (I1: 205-206; I2: 112-113; I4: 183-192; I6: 898).

Especially limited time and people is an issue, as a few respondents explain: “it is very hard here...we will be doing it 24/7, but we are so...less people, we are just a few people and we needed more people to help” (I6: 360-365) and “it takes a lot of time from your day, a lot of energy, a lot of heart pain. To see all these animals, to want to do something better but you can’t. How much can a few people do...” (I8: 455-460).

But also the great amount of resources needed is a challenge, as another respondent explains: “just imagine that you foster around 70 to 80 dogs all the year, you have to do the vaccinations for 80 dogs, you have to do the micro-chip, you have to castrate them, you will buy medicines because always something happens... So it is really difficult for us” (I4: 241-247).

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“You see that we are here, four people. Four persons for 350 animals. What you expect? Must be you know, more volunteers, more people to come and help. And of course the government must also help.”

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- G. from Rhodes Animal Welfare Society (I2: 107-113)

In addition, extra pressure is put on the animal welfare organisations via social media. This, as there is a general Facebook page called ‘Kynokomeio Rhodes Kennel House’ where (almost) every day people write posts such as *“there and there is a dog, can someone go look”* instead of taking (care of) it themselves (I1: 215-216).

Moreover, the same happens on the individual Facebook pages of each organisation as also here a lot of people ask for help if they have seen a dog somewhere, but often come up with an excuse why they cannot do something themselves (I4: 187-192). Therefore, there is a general feeling amongst this stakeholder group that *“they want to put everything on the charities if they can”* (I6: 898) and *“many people see, but only a few help”* (I4: 183-184).

#### 4.2.2 Government and municipality

Although the central and local government should be the main responsible stakeholder in dog management, as a result of lack of law enforcement, lack of money and resources and the fact that there is no general policy, all respondents agreed that the government does not do enough to solve the issue of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

##### Lack of law enforcement

In theory, the government of Greece has made (new) rules and regulations in order to protect animals and punish those who harm them.

Thus, according to one respondent, the law has improved a lot and it is very strict, with high fees. As he states: *“If somebody is abandoning [a] dog and was captured it will be prosecuted and he is going to pay [a] high fee. As far as I know about ten thousand euro[s]”* (I7: 168-170). Additionally, another case, where a local man poisoned a dog, resulted in a five year penalty in jail and a fine of 30,000 euros (I3: 7-8).

However, these seem to be exceptional cases and in practice the law is often not enforced (I1: 32; I2: 42-45; I4: 344; I5: 67; I6: 441). As a matter of fact, although the police is obliged to cooperate (I1: 36), police officers are often not aware of the rules (I4: 568).

Moreover, as usually older people harm the dogs there is often means of ‘eased circumstances’ (I1: 41-42).

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“You know some laws they are there, but they don’t applicate it. If I ask you how many people went in jail, because they abused dogs...”

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- G. from Rhodes Animal Welfare Society (I2: 42-43)

Also when it comes to micro-chipping the new law is often not respected (I4: 344; I6: 704-705; I8: 633-644). As one respondent explains: *“Yes, this is true, but who is going to look for that? We have found many dogs with no micro-chip. They did that, for the hunters, so they put micro-chips on their dogs and do the rabies vaccination, because many hunters, as I told you before, they are abandoning their animals when they go for hunting”* (I4: 344-350).

##### Lack of money and resources

Not only lack of law enforcement but also lack of money and resources make it more difficult to solve the issue of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

Namely, due to the economic crisis *“a lot of money that used to go locally, now goes centrally to pay for the debts of the country”* (I8: 490-491). Hence, although each municipality should get money for the stray dogs (I5: 64), the money that is available to address the issue of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes is very limited (I8: 491-492). Moreover, besides the issue of free-roaming dogs also *“people have problems”* and Greece has to deal with other issues such as the immigrants (I8: 424-425).

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“For sure they will not prioritise the animals when there are so many other things they need to do.”

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- Board manager Atrium Hotel (I8: 492-493)

##### No general policy

As there is no general policy for animal welfare, every municipality can choose their own way to address the issue. Therefore *“sometimes you hear of these people who want to collect the dogs and kill them. Because they think that is the best way to address the problem. And you have other people who are trying to find a way to do something with programs or neuter the animals and stuff like this”* (I8: 472-479).

When it comes to Rhodes, the mayor promised to help with the municipality shelter, but in reality not much effort has been made (I8: 488-489).

### Carelessness

In the end, according to many respondents it all comes down to the fact that the government does not care enough and they should do more about the issue of free-roaming dogs (I2: 37-38; I4: 333; I5: 64; I6: 440-450; I8: 466-467).

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“Oh the government, no! This government especially said ‘we take care of animal rights and do all this stuff’, [but] they did not do anything...”

- Board manager Atrium Hotel (I8: 466-467)

### 4.2.3 Veterinarians

On the one hand, the veterinarians in Rhodes help the animal welfare organisations by treating and neutering many animals, often at a reduced rate. Yet, there have also been occasions where the local vets counteract the attempt of solving the issue of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

### Help

The animal welfare organisations work closely together with the veterinarians on the island and often have connections with one or a few particular vets where they bring their dogs (I4: 225; I6: 194). Therefore, one veterinarian spoken to also had the money collecting boxes of Lucky Paws and Stray Gang (see appendix D page 49).

Besides, frequently, the veterinarians help by charging less money for treatments like castrations and vaccinations (I1: 234; I4: 236; I6: 202). As a result, according to two respondents “*everybody owes money to the vet*” (I4: 237; I5: 54). However, according to another respondent this stakeholder group actually should do a little bit more. As she argues: “*If you have so many, there are quite a few vets, they could easily say like every month, we sterilise two, three dogs...*” (I1: 239-240).

### Counteract

Besides contributing to solve the issue of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes, there have also been occasions where local veterinarians actually counteracted by boycotting the volunteer vets coming from abroad.

This, as the vets are afraid that people are taking their own animals to the volunteers instead of taking them to the local vet (I8: 78-82). This could be reasoned by the fact that the vets on the island are expensive (I8: 184).

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“It is a little bit of [a] ridiculous argument, but you always find money is more important than the well-being of animals for people. So they blocked already a group of Dutch people who were coming to neuter cats every year.”

- Board manager Atrium Hotel (I8: 78-82)

Furthermore, sometimes the vets fail to put the name of the owner in the system if a dog has a micro-chip. However, this is essential to link a dog to an owner if it gets lost (I8: 634-636).

### Mixed feelings

Lastly, when asking a veterinarian his opinion about the situation of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes on the one hand he felt “*pretty bad*” but at the same time he felt “*good*” because he is “*doing something about it*” (I7: 13-15).

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“I am in the problem and we try to solve it... I can help them pretty good I think.”

- Veterinarian (I7: 13-15)

### 4.2.4 Locals

As mentioned in section 4.1.4, many locals in Rhodes are defined as ‘irresponsible dog owners’. This, as they take upon different roles in which they abandon their dogs, neglect to neuter them and often let their pets roam free. Hereby, local dog owners are the number one source for free-roaming dogs in Rhodes. In addition, also the importance of micro-chipping is often overlooked as most of the owners do not chip their dog, which is for instance claimed by a respondent stating: “*I don’t think I can tell you that fifty per cent of the animals are even chipped*” (I8: 642-644). However, also non-dog owners are involved in the issue. When going more in-depth, this behaviour can be linked to different underlying causes, which will be explained in the following sections.



## Human-dog relationship

According to many respondents spoken to, the human-dog relationship in Greece is different than it might be in other countries.

A reason for this is given by one respondent claiming that a dog does not make profit for the Greeks. Therefore, goats and chickens are much more important and actually *“have a better life than the dogs here”*. This, as a dog *“does not bring anything”* while goats create profit, as they can be sold for meat for instance (I1: 54-57).

Therefore, dogs are often used as ‘tools’ to guard a piece of land (I1: 86), to protect a house (I2: 31) or to use for hunting (I1: 298-299; I2: 31; I4: 361).

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*“The people here use them. Like the shepherds, so the sheeps don’t pass away. They are like protection. These dogs are in 40 degrees, without water, without food, without nothing. They are like slaves.”*

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- G. from Rhodes Animal Welfare Society (I2: 3-8)

Although the hunters and the shepherds both need dogs in order to carry out their profession, the hunting dogs are often *“treated really badly”* (I1: 298-299) and the shepherds are known to kill other dogs that come too close to their sheep (I2: 64-68; I4: 65-66). Thus, according to one respondent the hunting season is the worst period of the year as the hunters often abandon dogs when they become ‘useless’ to them, after which they have to search for food themselves. Then, if the dogs come across shepherds and they see hunting dogs, *“they hang them or they kill them”* (I4: 59-66).

However, also dogs that are being kept as a pet are oftentimes looked at as ‘property’ instead of as a ‘friend’ or ‘family member’. This lowers the threshold for people to abandon them if they want a new one (I6: 46) or if they do not want to pay the vet costs (I3: 3-4).

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*“Dogs are like property here. People don’t want to pay the vet costs, so they rather get a new one. Like ‘this one is broken, so let’s replace it with a new one’.”*

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- M. from Rhodes Animal Welfare Society (I3: 3-4)

Also, presumably due to the superstition that black animals bring bad luck (I19: 20), many Greeks only *“like the small, fluffy white dogs”* (I4: 567) and therefore black dogs have an even higher chance of being abandoned (I19: 20-21).

Additionally, while observing a lot of guard dog signs were spotted, which implies that dogs have a different purpose here than solely companionship (see appendix D, pages 22, 23 & 64).

## Mentality

An underlying reason why some people in Greece tend to look at their dogs as subjects has everything to do with the ‘mentality’ and the ‘education’ (I1: 69; I2: 27-30; I4: 548; I5: 79-81; I6: 530-538; I8: 586-587; I11: 7; I14: 22). This mentality has been taught by the grandparents who *“put the tradition into the children that dogs are dirty, dogs have diseases and if you don’t want it you can just poison it”* (I6: 530-538). Besides these statements, the children could also witness their grandparents throwing stones to the animals (I6: 536).

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*“When we were kids our parents or grandparents used to say things like ‘if you do not eat your food the dog is going to bite you’ or ‘if you say bad things the cat will bite your tongue’.”*

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- N. from Stray Gang (I5: 79-80)

As a result, many Greek people have the mentality that dogs are dirty or scary (I1: 285-290; I4: 543-544). According to the interviewees this can be defined as a cultural matter, as one states: *“the local people here, they don’t have the same mentality like other people. Like tourists, like French, German, Finnish people”* (I2: 28-29).

Or as another respondent illustrates: *“Usually tourists are not afraid of animals. When our animal is flying, they let the children play with [the] dogs. [But] if you see a Greek family, and we pass with the box with the dog, they are grabbing their kids like this, like don’t go next to the dog!”* (I4: 540-544).

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*“They think in a really different way.”*

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- M. from Stray Gang (I4: 548)

Therefore, there are several stories about Greek people killing dogs (I1: 69-72), often by poisoning or hanging them (I4: 168; I6: 284; I18: 14-15) simply because *“they don’t want (to see) the strays”* (I4: 286).

### New generation

Nonetheless, several respondents mentioned that the relationship between humans and dogs is improving in Rhodes with the new generation and the younger generation is showing more affection for the canine race (I2: 32; I4: 41; I7: 153-155).

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*“There is a very good relationship now between the young people. The young people they have very good affection with the dogs. They don’t care about specific races, they adopt dogs...”*

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- Pet shop owner (I7: 153-155)

### 4.2.5 Tourism businesses

Different motivational factors lead to tourism businesses in Rhodes either mistreating the strays, but also taking care of them and even helping the animal welfare organisations in order to solve the issue of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

#### Mistreat

As mentioned in paragraph 4.1 free-roaming dogs can annoy businesses by for instance begging, or because they are afraid that the dogs might bother or harm their guests. As a result, before the start of the tourist season some business owners are known to put poison on the streets in order to ‘get rid of the problem’ (I1: 100-114; I6: 579-606). However, it is often difficult to find proof (I4: 392-393). Therefore *“you cannot point fingers”* (I8: 566) and if they are not caught in the act *“the police cannot do something”* (I4: 393).

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*“Most dogs are staying at the hotels where they get food from the tourists. In the end of the season, the owner from the hotel don't want to keep the dogs, so they throw poison when he close his hotel. Or he lets them starve there, and if they survive the winter and they are still there in the spring time before the hotel is open, then he throws poison...”*

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- M. from Paws & Claws (I6: 602-606)

Besides poisoning, one respondent also mentions anecdotes about (people from) restaurants kicking dogs or throwing water at them (I8: 234-237). Although, the interviewee argues that in general she does not think that people are so cruel, she understands that people have to protect their business and their clients, especially if they are afraid of dogs or simply don’t like them.

According to her, the problem is that there is not a (simple) solution which will be good for both the business as well as the animal. Therefore, *“everybody is improvising according to their perception of animal welfare”* (I8: 255-256). As a result, there are people who catch the dog and then try to find a home for it, but there are others who will just leave it in the forest or even poison it. Hence, according to this respondent *“there are many ways to get rid of the problem”* (I8: 253-259).

#### Care

Despite the previous stories, there are also multiple examples of tourism businesses actually taking care of the free-roaming dogs in Rhodes. Especially in the center of Rhodes Town, the free-roaming dogs are known to be taken care of by the people living and working here (I1: 95-96; I4: 383; I6: 312). A lot of restaurants feed the dogs (I4: 375-383; I9: 22-23; I10: 5), with one example being restaurant Sarris where two dogs always come back to. As the waiter explained: *“We do not own them, but they kind of belong here”* (I13: 6).

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*“There are four restaurants around us that keep feeding them... They seem pretty happy and well fed. Better I guess than locked in cages in our local animal welfare.”*

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- Reservations department In Camera Art Boutique Hotel (I9: 22-28)

Next to feeding them, some businesses also give shelter to the dogs. For instance, when a stray dog approached the staff of Atrium Hotel (outside the center of Rhodes Town) they decided to take it in, neuter and vaccinate it and take care of it (I8: 122-136). In addition, the wife of the owner of Elysium Hotel in Kalithea is known to love dogs as well and therefore has made *“a bigger cage around the hotel to put dogs”* (I8: 355).

However, one respondent argued that although there are people that really love them, sometimes the only reason tourism businesses take care of the strays is because there are tourists around and they cannot do otherwise (I4: 378-379).

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*“They know that tourists love animals. So they don’t harm them. But when the tourists go away, unfortunately...”*

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- M. from Stray Gang (I4: 493-497)



## Help

Nonetheless, different motivational factors can lead to tourism businesses helping the animal welfare organisations to actually solve the issue of free-roaming dogs.

For starters, sometimes businesses help because it is good for the corporate image, as one respondent illustrates: *“There are some hotels that take a donations thing on their receptions...they have to write, in the form, what they do about the environment, about something on the island. So they write that they help strays, so this is good for the hotels image”* (I4: 398-414).

In contrary, another respondent argued that the hotels do not want to make publicity for the stray dogs, as they refused to put brochures of the municipality shelter in their reception. According to him, the number of hotels helping them is very limited and only one hotel (in Faliraki) agreed to donate left over food to the shelter. The others do not seem to have time and *“prefer to throw it in the garbage”* (I2: 128-151).

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**“They do not want to make publicity. What publicity? Stupid. It is to save animals.”**

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- G. from Rhodes Animal Welfare Society (I2: 139)

Although, when this issue was raised to the owner of Spirit of the Knights Boutique hotel in Old Town, he claimed that also his hotel donates food to the municipality shelter and he would be *“more than happy to help if brochures were made”* (I10: 10-27). Moreover, according to the board manager of Atrium Hotel their business offered to donate food as well, but this offer was refused by the municipality shelter. Although, according to the respondent this was ‘understandable’ as the food might have small bones or ingredients which could harm the dogs (I8: 386-408).

Furthermore, when Lindos View Hotel had a wish to establish a feeding area for dogs, cats or even birds, they were restricted from their collaborating tour operators Thomson and Thomas Cook. According to the tour operators the risk was too high to possibly poison the animals and spread diseases through their faecal. Nonetheless, the HR manager stated that: *“if there was an organisation regarding food collection, we would believe we would contribute”* (I12: 20-24). Accordingly, the owner of Spirit of the Knights Boutique Hotel in Old Town believes that if there was a collection from the shelters or charities, more hotels would cooperate (I10: 29-31).

Besides for ‘image’ reasons, multiple respondents claimed to help the free-roaming dogs out of a ‘personal passion’ for the animals. As one respondent explains: *“The help is something personal. Myself and my wife have two dogs, one of which we rescued from the street. We have consequently developed a personal passion”* (I10: 27-29). Similarly, when the owner of To Marouli was asked why she had the money boxes in her restaurant, her response was that because of her love for the animals she feels that she: *“cannot walk around here and do nothing!”* (I14: 7). Next to the money boxes, the restaurant also holds fundraisers and events to collect money for the animals.

Hence, according to the board manager of Atrium Hotel it is not necessarily the businesses that help the dogs, but more the *people* from the businesses (I8: 352). As mentioned in paragraph 4.1, several members from the charities are working in tourism businesses as well.

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**“They know, if they go to [the] reception and ask ‘do you know someone who can help?’ that it's me. I don't know what happens to other hotels. Maybe they just say we don't know or anything. Because I wouldn't know also if I haven't met some people, around through friends who know friends and we all love animals... That's how I got in touch with this group of people for doing this.”**

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- Board manager Atrium Hotel (I8: 451-455)

However, there have also been occasions in which the hotel staff ‘did not care’ and did not want to help tourists when they asked for help with the strays (I5: 35-38).

Besides businesses like hotels or restaurants, also the airport in Rhodes is a big help for the animal welfare organisations, as the staff helps them cut lines and makes it easier for them to travel with the dogs (I6: 905-906). Lastly, when asked at the biggest tour operator in Rhodes Town TUI, they only had an initiative for cats (I18: 20).

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**“We are a pet-friendly hotel and follow the local shelters and animal welfare organisations in order to be kept aware of the current situation and provide assistance.”**

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- Operations manager Caesar's Gardens Hotel & Spa (I11: 18-19)

## Products

Finally, while observing, a remarkable amount of souvenirs were designed with “the cats of Greece” or the “donkeys of Greece”, the latter especially in Lindos (see appendix D, pages 30 and 63). Hence, although at one hand these animals are poisoned or even ‘exploited for business’, on the other hand they are used as a way to position Rhodes and Greece in general. As one respondent complains: *“They all have the dogs and cats on postcards here, but in the meantime they poison them... it is crazy”* (I2: 159-160).

### 4.2.6 Tourists

Although spotting free-roaming dogs on holiday could be a reason not to come back, sometimes the stories also have a happy ending and tourists actually help by donating, volunteering or even adopting the stray they ‘felt so sorry for’. Moreover, a distinction could be made between sick animals and cared for animals whether they were seen as a problem.

#### Like cared for animals

As mentioned in paragraph 4.1, there have been occasions whereby tourists were ‘shocked’ and ‘devastated’ after seeing the strays in Rhodes and sometimes they even do not want to return because of this. However a distinction can be made between the sick or mistreated dogs and those who look ‘cared for’ and ‘healthy’. Although it can occur that people are generally afraid of dogs or do not like them, several respondents mentioned that in most cases the dogs were welcomed by the guests (I1: 114-118; I10: 4-6; I12: 11-12) and *“usually tourists are not afraid of animals”* (I4: 540).

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**“Once a little puppy came to the hotel and was very welcomed by the guests.”**

- HR manager Lindos View Hotel (I12: 11-12)

Moreover, sometimes it can even be a reason to go back to a place. This is highlighted by a respondent stating: *“We always had a business and I care for three stray dogs from my neighbourhood and they always come inside. And most people thought it was beautiful, the tourists. Some even came back especially for the dogs”* (I1: 114-117).

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**“Tourists feel safe around them and like the fact that they are looked after.”**

- Owner Spirit of the Knights Boutique Hotel (I10: 5-6)

Observations in Rhodes Town confirmed this, as multiple tourists were spotted petting the dogs that looked healthy and cared for, but when it comes to the one dog in New Town that had a visible skin condition, people took a step back and a mother told her child not to touch it, while stating *“poor doggy”*.

#### Help

Occasionally, tourists also help the animal welfare organisations in order to solve the issue of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

This is being done by donating money, food, or supplies like medicines and blankets (I2: 34; I4: 334-335; I14: 15; I17: 7), volunteering at the shelters (I4: 334; I14: 14-15) or by adopting dogs (I1: 174-175; I2: 27; I4: 338-339; I8: 293-309). Sometimes, tourists even come especially to Rhodes to *“help out and volunteer”* (I14: 14-15).

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**“Much tourists came here in the shelter, it is more help for us. Because they can get some dogs, they make donations, or food you know.”**

- G. from Rhodes Animal Welfare Society (I2: 33-34)

The fact that tourists indeed care and want to help is proven by the many examples one respondent gives, as she illustrates: *“I had people in our hotel, who wanted to help. There is a woman who comes from Holland and every time she was here she was going around, feeding the cats, seeing the dogs. She was walking the dog downstairs. Another woman from Austria she was going down to see Bruna last year and every time she comes she brings things for the strays... Another woman here actually found a dog that she wanted to adopt, so she changed her flight, she went with the boat to Athens and then flew to Sweden with the dog. And another couple, British couple actually, two weeks ago they found a dog in Kolymbia and they felt, this poor doggy is tied and everything and [they] thought okay they don't have kids, we take the dog with us.”* (I8: 287-307).

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**“Sometimes the stories have a happy ending.”**

- Board manager Atrium Hotel (I8: 324)

#### Aggravate

Albeit not deliberately, sometimes tourists can also aggravate the situation or make things more difficult for the animal welfare organisations.

For starters, oftentimes tourists are known to feed the strays (I1: 132-134; I9: 22), which is in fact a positive behaviour. However, as mentioned before this results in the animals returning to certain places and if businesses or other guests are not amused by this, this can generate problems (I8: 136-140). Moreover, *“by tourists over-feeding them and getting them used to humans providing food, they stop instinctively hunting which ultimately causes them to go through very difficult winter months where tourists are no longer here to feed them”* (I11: 11-14). Secondly, frequently tourists contact the animal welfare organisations to report stray dogs they have seen and to ask for help I1: 303; I4: 84-86; I6: 299-300; I8: 266-270).

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*“Tourists are coming, they are staying at the hotel, they are sending e-mails to all the organizations we saw this dog there, we saw this puppy there... Yes but there is no place to put them anymore!”*

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- M. from Stray Gang (I4: 84-86)

Although it comes from the right intentions, it puts a lot of pressure on the animal welfare organisations. As a lady from Paw & Claws for instance mentions: *“We are messaged three, four times a day from tourists, come and get this dog...It can't happen of course”* (I6: 299-300). Besides, Paws & Claws had to hide their telephone number as they were getting called in the middle of the night by tourists saying they have seen a dog or a kitten. As one member describes: *“They've all come out of the bar drunk, they have seen a dog or a kitten with a limp...can you come and get it? No! We are actually sleeping at this time you know. It is very difficult in this season. But we are very diplomatic, because their heart is in the right place”* (I6: 349-356). Moreover, sometimes tourists even take the dogs from Rhodes Town back to their hotel and then message the charities the day before they fly. However, they do not understand that the dogs in Rhodes Town are being cared for and his carers are actually looking for them (I6: 300-306).

Hence, it comes to show that tourists may have different perceptions, especially when they are not used to seeing stray animals in their home country. As one respondent confirms: *“Tourists are not used to seeing stray animals or sick animals. It can look sick to tourists, but healthy for me”* (I14: 46-47).

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*“Tourists cause big problems! They do not understand. They see a dog on the street and they assume its a stray....”*

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- S. from Paws & Claws (I6: 314-322)

### **Improve**

Nonetheless, tourists might also improve the situation in Rhodes. As one respondent points out, by pushing tour operators or big tourist organisations, tourists could *“push Greece to make things better for animals”* as *“then they will listen, because money talks”* (I8: 514-519). However, this call for change needs to have a certain volume, as the respondent acknowledges that if only one or two persons complain, nothing will happen.

## **4.3 How can free-roaming dogs in Rhodes best be managed?**

After describing the situation and the roles and attitudes of the different stakeholders, this paragraph will assess both local opinions as well as expert opinions when it comes to the question how the free-roaming dogs in Rhodes can best be managed.

### **4.3.1 Local opinions**

According to the respondents interviewed in Rhodes, education about proper dog ownership is needed, which should start with the children. Moreover, a better organization and collaboration amongst the stakeholders is required, as well as more input from local veterinarians, possibly in the form of a clinic. Lastly, different ways should stimulate the adoption of the dogs in Rhodes.

### **Education**

When asked how the free-roaming dogs in Rhodes should be managed, the interviewees unanimously agreed that education has a very important role (I1: 143-144; I4: 41-48; I5: 73-75; I6: 519-524; I8: 187-200; I11: 24-27). For starters, many respondents stated that the children should be educated as it *“starts with the children”* (I1: 243; I5: 73) and *“our hope is only the new generation”* (I4: 41). Thus, the schools need to teach the children that *“a dog has a soul”* (I6: 519) and how to take proper care of it (I6: 541; I8: 198) but also how to react to ‘strange dogs’ (I8: 199-200).

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“We believe that the real solution could be by focusing on the core of the problem. By raising awareness and educating the people, young generations on the importance of animal treatment and respect this could avoid future abandonment.”

- Operations manager Caesar's Gardens Hotel & Spa (I11: 24-27)

Next, also education should be given to dog owners about the importance of neutering and vaccinations (I4: 149-154; I5: 71-73; I6: 569-570; I11: 27-28). This, as the problem starts with the dog owners (I4: 125; I5: 71; I6: 569) and “if the people will not understand that they have to sterilise their dogs, we will continue to have this problem” (I4: 149-154).

However, this will take time and as one respondent points out it is not something that can be solved in a matter of days (I8: 192-193).

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“It is not something that can be solved I think in [a] small period of time. It takes time, it takes organization, it takes change of mentality, from everybody...”

- Board manager Atrium Hotel (I8: 192-193)

### Organization and collaboration

As the animal welfare organisations feel that they have too much responsibility, they believe that there should be more people helping them out (I2: 112-114; I6: 365). However, one respondent argues that also between the animal welfare organisations there should be more collaboration and actually “the best thing should be to be one, and be all the people together” (I4: 202-203). As a matter of fact, another respondent wishes there would be a bigger organisation to coordinate all the smaller ones. As she states: “I wish there could be something, like a PETA abroad or something. Because that would be a bigger organization to help the smaller ones and then all the ways of communication and of sending dogs and everything would be much easier” (I8: 460-462).

Moreover, although there are external parties that are willing to help out, there is oftentimes “a huge lack of organization” (I8: 424). When it comes to hotels donating food for instance, (as mentioned before) a lot more hotels would be willing to cooperate if there was an organisation that would coordinate the food collection (I8: 417-420; I10: 29-30; I12: 23-24). As one hotel owner explains: “I do not think that it is a lack of care, but more that time is an issue” (I10: 30-31).

### Legislation and law enforcement

In order to solve the issue of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes, an important stakeholder which should step up their game is the government. According to several respondents there need to be “harsher laws on the civilians who abandon or mistreat animals” (I11: 28) and the government should take an example to Europe when it comes to protecting animals (I2: 49-50). More importantly, these laws need to be enforced, as one respondent remarks that the problem will not come to an end unless there will be noticeable consequences for those who harm or abandon animals (I11: 8-9).

However, multiple respondents recognize the fact that due to the financial crisis there are limited resources in Greece to address the issue (I6: 741; I8: 416-417) and therefore “you cannot compare the Greek system with the other European countries” (I6: 747).

### The role of vets

Another crucial stakeholder group when it comes to dog management are the veterinarians, and according to two respondents the vets in Rhodes should actually contribute more by neutering more animals (I1: 239-240; I2: 51).

In fact, according to two other interviewees, this could take place in a special designed clinic or ‘small hospital’ (I6: 641-645; I8: 180-181). According to them, here all the veterinarians could work together to neuter and vaccinate the dogs (I8: 190-191). Besides, one of the respondents even brings up the idea of assigning specialised veterinarians to different conditions.

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“The perfect, what was the best here, to have a big clinic with some vets there, for all orthopaedic, skin problems...for every sickness a special vet. Like we have in Holland, in Germany and everything. And then to work all the local vets together [and] if they don't want, we bring them from abroad.”

- M. from Stray Gang (I6: 641-644)

### Stimulate adoptions

Lastly, according to multiple respondents another solution is to stimulate adoptions (I2: 53-58; I3: 76-92; I8: 589-590) as “the shelter should only be a transit place” and the dogs should be in a house with a family, instead of in a cage (I2: 20-23).



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“The shelter should be a transit place you know, for like a month and after that find a family. Not for years. It is difficult, maybe we have one adoption, and the same day you find five, six dogs. And only the small ones get adopted, so [they] don’t leave space for others to come.”

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- G. from Rhodes Animal Welfare Society (I2: 20-23)

First of all, the process has to be made easier for the tourists, so when they come there is not a lot of paperwork and after their intentions are checked they should be able to adopt a dog (I2: 53-56).

Secondly, fixing lines with people abroad where there is more demand for animals should make it easier for the dogs to find new families (I8: 177-180). Moreover, another way to stimulate adoptions is by promoting the shelters, either on social media (I3: 76-77) or via brochures in hotels. As one interviewee remarks: “In all the hotels they must put the brochure, that if you need adoptions of animals, you have to go to the municipality shelter and get the animals. There are so many here. I am sure that all these tourists, they will come to here” (I2: 128-131).

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“Just spread the word and tell about this place. Not many people know about this place.”

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- M. from Rhodes Animal Welfare Society (I3: 91-92)

However another respondent doubts if this will be successful as “most of the people who love animals already have their own” and people would have to be willing to pay a lot of money as the just the plane ticket alone can cost several hundreds of euros. Therefore, the interviewee argues that you “have to have this special affection and love for an animal that you see.... that is suffering or something to say okay, I will take this animal” (I8: 441-447).

On the other hand, she proposes to completely ban shops from selling and breeding animals in order to change the mentality that dogs are just something that you ‘buy and sell’. Instead, a system that collects dogs from the streets and puts them up for adoption (but without killing them) should be organised. This way, “there would be the animals off the street and there will not be new animals from the shops out in the street” (I8: 582-594). However, although she is convinced that people who love animals do not care about specific races, she admits that it will be not very easy to realise and especially Greece will not be “the pioneer in this subject” (I8: 608).

### 4.3.2 Expert opinions

In addition, two interviews with experts in the field of dog-management gave more detailed insight into how the management of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes should look like.

#### Education

When the topic education was raised, both respondents acknowledged its importance, as “it stands and falls with the mentality of the people, as they have to stop putting those animals on the streets” (I19: 24-25).

According to the experts, the people not only need to be educated about responsible pet ownership (I19: 39-40), but also about the legal consequences for abusing animals (I20: 546). As one respondent points out, “there is a huge informational gap” and oftentimes “people would not believe that someone would fine them this amount of money for a dog. And they change on the spot, simply because we have informed the people that... that is illegal” (I20: 546-559).

Besides, at the moment there are pressing requests by the animal welfare federation of Greece for the ministry of education of the Greek government to implement a specialised course for school children about human-animal relations at all levels of the education. Although this was positively received, it is yet to be realised. (I20: 574-577). Nonetheless, there is already an educational booklet available, which is free to download for everyone and translated into Greek as well (I19: 435) (see appendix M for an impression). Although education is an important tool, according to one respondent the impact of education should also not be overestimated, as outside of school the children will still experience a different reality than what is being taught (I20: 107-112).

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“As far as I am concerned, the point is not for them to learn to love animals, the point is for people to learn to respect animals.”

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- Board member Panhellenic Animal Welfare & Environmental Federation (I20: 121-122)

Moreover, both experts agree with the local respondent stating that it needs time, as they mention “it will not happen overnight” (I20: 514) and it will take multiple generations in order to change the mentality (I19: 62-63; I20: 515).

## Organization and collaboration

According to one of the experts, the only proven way to address a free-roaming dog population is by means of a TNR project (Trap Neuter Return) as explained in section 2.6.1 of the literature review (I19: 8-11). However, in order to successfully implement such a project, input from different parties is needed.

As the interviewee explains: *“you need to establish a steering committee, with a representative of every party”* (I19: 367). In sum, there need to be people involved who are responsible for neutering the animals, people from the animal welfare organisations and shelters, politicians and if possibly students from a university that will count the population on the island beforehand (I19: 367-373). It is especially helpful if there is an academic basis as it increases the validity and representativeness. This, as the respondent stresses the importance of showing figures and numbers to the government in order to explain the situation and how it should be tackled. Consequently, such a program needs to be monitored and also these figures and numbers need to be presented to the local authorities, as they serve as actual proof that the program worked (I19: 253-255). Moreover, according to the expert it is essential that Greek organisations are involved as the initiative has to come from the island itself and also here, as well as in the Greek government, there will be people who care about animal welfare (I19: 129-130 & 246-247).

In addition, the more the dog population will be treated against parasites like fleas, worms and ticks the healthier they are, which consequently lowers health risks for people and other animals (I19: 269-273).

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**“The whole thing stands and falls with the organisational structure.”**

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- Chairwoman StrayAFP (I19: 372)

Hence, although the animal welfare organisations in Rhodes have different ideas and methods of working, it is important that they are on the same level of understanding and pursue the same goal (I19: 242-243). As a matter of fact, both respondents even stated it is impossible to merge the organisations into one animal welfare organisation, as *“people just are different”* (I19: 387-392) and they will always have *“different priorities and different ideas”* (I20: 908-909).

Therefore, communication and coordination is very important, not only between the animal welfare organisations but also with stakeholders like the hunting associations, who might be excluded at first (I19: 357-363).

However, according to the expert from Greece, talking to hunters will be a no-win situation or at least will take generations. *“Not because they are bad people”* but just because *“they were brought up into hunting”* in a certain way and they will not change that easily because *“some crazy animal welfare guy or lady”* is telling them how to carry out their jobs (I20: 447-464).

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**“So it is a cultural experience, that simply will not change because I walk on someone and I give them a nice PowerPoint presentation and I tell things to them. On this cases, unfortunately the only instrument you have on your disposal is the law. It is a dual approach, you have to hold the carrot in one hand and the stick in the other.”**

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- Board member Panhellenic Animal Welfare & Environmental Federation (I20: 473-479)

Lastly, a way in which the tourism industry could help is by providing information leaflets to tourists who are traveling to destinations where there is known to be a free-roaming dog population. In this case, when booking a trip tourists will be informed beforehand about the do's and don't when coming across a dog and if they want to help which organisation to contact or where they can donate money and if they really want to adopt a dog, which guidelines should be followed (I19: 952-980).

## Legislation and law enforcement

As one of the experts states: *“The better the economy and political stability in a country, the better the animal welfare will be”* (I19: 51-58). Especially in countries with limited financial resources it is very difficult to assign enough people in order to make sure all laws are enforced (I19: 562-563).

As the expert of Greece exemplifies: *“Under Greek law, every police station should have a special scanner so when they come across a domestic pet, they should run the scan over the animal to verify if it is carrying the chip and if it is not, they should issue a fine of 300 euros on the spot. Perfect, in theory. In fact is, five year down the road, not a single police station has been equipped with a scanner. Now that includes every other agency that is responsible for this kind of monitoring and of checking. The forest rangers, the municipal police, the*



port police, the veterinary services at the municipal and regional level. So you are talking about hundreds, if not of thousands of potentially checking points. That not a single one of them is properly equipped to do the job that is required to do. Because again it is a cost. A scanner costs around one hundred euros, multiply that by one thousand... Of course it is a cost that can be covered through the fines and so on. But of course there are other more pressing priorities..." (I20: 141-165).

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**"It is not like in the Netherlands or any other country that you walk into the police station and then you walk out after five minutes escorted by a police car and a police man."**

- Board member Panhellenic Animal Welfare & Environmental Federation (I20: 191-193)

On the other side of the spectrum, also for the dog owners (lack of) money plays a major role in why the law is often not respected. Although the micro-chip is required by law, most dog owners do not follow it because it is an extra cost of thirty euros. However, the actual cost of the chip on the open market is five euros. Therefore, *"the only thing which is needed for the government is to issue a circular or a guidance or a new law and say that domestic animals would be chipped at the cost price. It would be the charge of thirty euros for something that costs five... It is a profit of over 500%..."* (I20: 42-46).

According to the interviewee, the solution lies in shifting the legal responsibility from the government to the animal welfare organisations. In this case, just like in the UK and in the US, the animal welfare organisations would get the right to press charges against anyone mistreating animals (I20: 211-212). This kind of legal framework has been made before in Greece but then in the case of hunting rangers, who got the actual legal and police ability to arrest people, carry guns and appear for court. However, the respondent also acknowledges the fact that it is usually 'elderly people' with a love for animals that make these groups and therefore he doubts whether they *"would be in the position to do that"* (I20: 263-270).

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**"So ask for the animal welfare organisations to employ their own animal police. But finance them through the fines."**

- Board member Panhellenic Animal Welfare & Environmental Federation (I20: 252-254)

Moreover, a way to move the government into taking action for the strays is by means of public pressure, both from the ordinary citizens as from abroad. However, as pressure from abroad can *"easily backfire"* it is highlighted that ideally it should come from the local citizens of Greece. This, as *"it could sound very offensive, for a non-Greek to come to the Greek local authorities, or to the ordinary Greek on the street"* and lecture them about animal welfare (I20: 494-502).

### **The role of vets**

Another reason why dog owners in Greece often do not chip their animal according to one of the respondents because they do not understand what the chip actually is and they think it will hurt their animal due to radiation (I20: 29-30). Therefore, according to both experts veterinarians should actually take their responsibility and inform their customers about the importance of micro-chips, neutering and vaccination (I19: 840-844; I20: 31).

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**"The veterinarians see the animals and dog owners on a daily basis. So they are very important when it comes to education as well."**

- Chairwoman StrayAFP (I19: 840-841)

Moreover, according to one respondent in an ideal world *"the vets would have to bear legal responsibility for treating an owned animal which is not chipped"* (I20: 32-33). However, regarding the price reduction of micro-chips the interviewee doubts whether it will succeed as *"it is a question of corporatism and of very strong veterinarians. All Greek veterinary associations, which is a lobby body of the vets, of course are pressing against that. Because they are going to lose money"* (I20: 65-67). And although the respondent does not blame them, as they have to make a living as well, he believes this should not come at the expense of the animals' welfare (I20: 91-99).

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**"We should move past our romantic ideas and see vets as doctors."**

- Board member Panhellenic Animal Welfare & Environmental Federation (I20: 94-95)

For this reason, one respondent argues to work with local veterinarians, as *"you have to make sure the whole story starts to live with the people over there and that they can also earn their money with it in a certain way"* (I19: 913-915). Ideally foreign veterinarians should only assist and share their knowledge, as oftentimes only this is appreciated (I19: 928-930).

## Stimulate adoptions

Although the 'shelter life' is not ideal, both experts agree with a no-kill policy, as you should not "kill an animal who's only crime is that it did not find anyone to love yet" (I20: 394-395). Moreover, one of the respondents remarks that, provided it is healthy and not aggressive, shelter dogs should not be euthanised as their lives do not differ too much from 'regular' pet dogs, just lying in (sometimes empty) houses. Therefore, if there is a "reasonable shelter, where they can protect themselves from the sun" she does not see a reason to euthanise them (I19: 621-629). However, when it comes to adoptions abroad, in the field the opinions are divided.

As one respondent explains, oftentimes authorities are against bringing strays from abroad into their country, because they are afraid the dogs have behavioural issues or they bring diseases. Besides, it is pointless if in the destination itself nothing is done to control the population, as the carrying capacity will just leave place for other dogs to come (I19: 650-657). Moreover, the interviewee is generally against 'adopting from a picture', as this way people have no idea what kind of dog they are getting. Therefore, it occasionally happens that there is a mismatch and the dogs end up returning to a shelter, only leaving the dog more traumatised (I19: 731-762).

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**"It is useless to bring those dogs from there to here, if they eventually will end up in a shelter here too..."**

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- Chairwoman StrayAFP (I19: 761-762)

Nonetheless, according to this respondent a way in which foreign adoptions could be successful is when it would be picked up on a wider scale and countries would mutually arrange it based on their 'supply and demand'. Thus, a system should be arranged between the shelters that relocate 'well adoptable dogs'. In this case, people from countries with a 'shortage of dogs' could go to their local shelter and "there would be a special corner with dogs coming from different channels" and they can choose one from there (I19: 700-704).

Also in Greece the opinions are divided, but then because people are afraid that the dogs will end up in bad places and will be "used in experiences, maltreated or even sexually abused" (I20: 869-872).

Moreover, as some people are not aware of the reality in other countries, they argue for instance: "why on earth would someone from the Netherlands ask to adopt a stray from Greece, as he can go to the streets of Amsterdam as well to pick a puppy" (I20: 873-974).

In addition, there are cases where people make a lot of profit out of selling puppies abroad and thereby take advantage of 'well-meaning people'. "So you have a black economy there" (I20: 878-881).

Luckily, also for this case the expert comes with a solution, as the respondent states: "now we are taking steps towards that, it is a so-called traces, which is basically a European level procedure that an animal, any animal travelling from one European country to another it is chipped and you have a way of monitoring from where it starts and where it goes and to include all money transactions...that is included" (I20: 884-887).

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**So yes, we are in favour of that, at the very clear and very concise framework. Which means checking where the animal is going to end up and what kind of money transactions are involved."**

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- Board member Panhellenic Animal Welfare & Environmental Federation (I20: 887-888)

Moreover, in order to stimulate adoptions one respondent comes with the idea to 'use' celebrities in order to spread the message of adopting a stray or half breed. As he argues: "every time you have a movie starring an animal, in the next couple of years you have a search of people going and buying this animals", which was proven in the case of the famous movie 'Hachi', starring an Akita Inu (I20: 813-819). Additionally, he also stresses the importance of informing the people about the reality of puppy mills and the problems purebreds may have due to in breeding (I20: 847-850). Therefore, he argues to "ban pet trade and to adopt animals only from authorised pet breeders" (I20: 803-804).

Lastly both respondents agree to let the (community) dogs stay in Rhodes Town, as they 'know the place' and will have a better life wandering around there, occasionally being fed, than they would have in the shelter. Moreover, according to one respondent it is also a "daily reminder of the issue" and for some people even the "only experience and relation they will have with a non-human animal". Also, removing them would only bring in new strays as "nature does not like vacuums" and these dogs actually keep the new strays out of the area" (I20: 775-780). Thus, the only thing is to make sure they cannot reproduce (I19: 1212).





# Chapter 5

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This chapter discusses the findings of the field research in regards to existing literature and theories that were illustrated in chapter two.

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# Discussion

The aim of this research was to improve the understanding of the situation of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes and the roles and attitudes of the different stakeholders in order to identify strategies, embedded in the political, economical and cultural context, to manage free-roaming dogs.

## 5.1 The situation of free-roaming dogs

In total 28 free-roaming dogs were counted in Rhodes Town, of which 19 in Old Town and 11 in New Town. This can be compared to the results of the study of Mannhart et al. in 2007, where 19 dogs were counted in the geographic area New Town and only 8 in Old Town. However, no conclusions can be drawn as the results can vary for different reasons, such as time of day and the expertise behind the team counting. Then again, the researcher conducted this study alone. Yet, in order to get a complete as possible picture, dogs were counted on different times of the day and although WSPA (2007a) suggests more dogs should be counted during the early morning, between 06.00 and 08.00 no dogs (or people) were seen within the castle walls of Old Town. This might be an indicator that some of the dogs here are indeed pets as Mannhart et al. (2007) indicated. However, also here no conclusions can be drawn.

Nonetheless, results did suggest that a distinction can be made when it comes to the welfare of the free-roaming dogs in Rhodes Town and outside of this area. Applying the theory of the five freedoms (FAWC, 1979), the free-roaming dogs inside the town are free of hunger and thirst, free of discomfort, free from pain, injury and disease, free to express their normal behaviour and free from fear and distress. This has been proven by the assessment according to the ICAM guidelines and only one dog was spotted in this area with a visible skin condition.

However, although Beck (1973) indicates dogs usually roam in packs, no packs were seen in Rhodes.

Moreover, the dogs showed no aggression and similarly to findings of Coppinger and Coppinger (2001) they mostly ignored the researcher's approach. However, unlike the dogs in Ethiopian (Ortolani et al. (2009) and Mexican villages (Ruiz-Izaguirre et al. (2014) most dogs in Rhodes were not shy of humans as they did not avoid the researcher's approach and occasionally even allowed to be pet.

As Waiblinger et al. (2006) imply, how animals react to people depends on previous experiences and thus the 'relaxed' attitude of the free-roaming dogs in Rhodes could be reasoned by the fact that every year they are accompanied by many tourists walking besides them, making them used to (non-familiar) humans. In addition, as Vas et al. (2005) pointed out, human's signals (either friendly or threatening) can influence a dog's behaviour, suggesting that these dogs are mainly experiencing positive human-dog interactions. This corresponds with the observations, as 86% of the interactions had a positive character, including people petting the dogs or calling them in a friendly way. Especially as some locals recognised the dogs and called them by their name, results suggest that the dogs are 'known' in the community, thus corresponding with the classification described by Kachani and Heath (2014) of being so-called 'community dogs'. An interview with a waiter confirmed this theory, as he mentioned the dogs at the restaurant were not owned by them, but they 'belonged' there so 'they were not strays' either.

Although a collar could be an indicator that a dog is neutered or (previously) owned, almost half of the dogs (41%) were spotted without a collar. Even though this does not indicate the opposite, for tourists it might generate the wrong impression as a previous study by Strickland (2015) demonstrated the thought among tourists that a collar equals ownership and therefore if a dog is spotted wearing a collar it is cared for and less aggressive.



Although most dogs within Rhodes Town looked healthy, results suggest the opposite for the dogs that are picked up by the shelters. As they often suffer from malnutrition, injuries and diseases like leishmania and lichia, these dogs are definitely not experiencing the 'five freedoms'. Albeit the shelters can solve some of these welfare issues, including freedom from discomfort by "*providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area*" (FAWC, 1979), the actual comfort of these shelters is yet to be discussed.

This, as during the observations it became clear that the shelters are overcrowded, with the municipality shelter at the most extreme, as it was built for 100 dogs but is housing a total of 350 dogs at the moment.

The disadvantages of a no-kill policy have already been discussed by Natoli et al. (2012) and Cafazzo et al. (2014), highlighting the chronic overpopulation in dog shelters, resulting in increasing welfare problems and rising management costs.

Thus, although dog shelters are considered to be a significant tool to control free-roaming dog populations (Passantino et al., 2006), debate also exists about the humanity of life in dog shelters (Srinivasan, 2013; Garner, 2004) as it is not easy nor inexpensive to kennel dogs in the long term without considerable suffering (ICAM, 2007). Hence, one might argue that euthanasia is a better solution in this case. However, according to Garner (2004) euthanasia of healthy dogs is also not considered as an ethical approach, which corresponds with the judgements of both experts when questioned about this topic.

Nonetheless, at the other tourist sites throughout the island no free-roaming dogs were observed, suggesting what respondents already implied, namely that the problem lies more in the villages away from touristic places. This is comparable to findings in other countries like Bhutan (Rinzin et al. (2016), Zimbabwe (Butler and Bingham, 2000), Kenya (Kitala et al., 2001), Bolivia (Suzuki et al., 2008), Mexico (Flores-Ibarra and Estrella-Valunzuella, 2004), Chile (Acosta-Jamett et al., 2010) and Thailand (Kongkaew et al., 2004) as also here free-roaming dogs were more present in rural areas, for the reason that here dog owners were more motivated to keep a dog for guarding crops, home premises or livestock in comparison to companionship, which was more common in urban areas.

Notwithstanding, free-roaming dogs in Rhodes are accompanied by several concerns, corresponding with existing theories. Just like the literature describes, the dogs cause health treats, nuisance through noise and fouling, livestock predation, fear of aggressive behaviour, road traffic accidents (ICAM, 2007) and image damage (Plumridge and Fielding 2003; Alie et al., 2007). Besides, especially as there are many restaurants in Rhodes, and they are all outside, an extra nuisance is indicated as begging behaviour. This issue is aggravated by the fact that dogs that often receive food from caregivers or tourists may be more likely to return to these places (Ruiz-Izaguirre et al. (2014). If not appreciated by the other guests or employees, this can cause irritation.

Similarly, also the related causes match to what is known in the literature. As for starters, completely in line with the findings of Mannhart et al. (2007), the most significant origin of the stray dog problem in Rhodes is related to irresponsible dog ownership. Moreover, the findings in this study match the causes that are stated by World Animal Protection (2015), being irresponsible dog ownership, but also deficient legislation and management programme, lack of cooperation of the veterinarians and access to resources via deficient waste management and people feeding the dogs. Additionally, the climate in Rhodes seems to ensure an increased survival rate. Moreover, also in the case of Rhodes these issues all relate back to lack of money and resources and ignorance from both the government as well as the people living here. Especially the economic crisis has been indicated by the respondents as a factor that triggers the problem of free-roaming dogs in Greece.

## 5.2 Roles and attitudes stakeholders

In sum, all stakeholders are known to take upon different roles and attitudes when it comes to the issue of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

### 5.2.1 Locals

As mentioned before, the number one cause of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes is related to irresponsible dog ownership. Therefore, dog owners in Rhodes are without a doubt the most important and influential stakeholder group. Results comply with suggestions of Mannhart et al. (2007) stating that dog owners in Rhodes often do not neuter their pets (because it is against a dog's nature or the veterinary

costs are too high), but allow them to roam free and frequently refuse to micro-chip their dog or use a collar for registration and identification purposes. This shows once again the role lack of money and resources and ignorance play.

However, the biggest concern according to the respondents spoken to in Rhodes has everything to do with the mentality of the people which causes them to abandon their pets. Besides unwanted puppies (as a direct consequence of not neutering), this frequently is the result of impulse pet purchases, which according to WAP (2015) is a common factor leading to abandonment.

In addition, findings of this study add the role of hunters and shepherds into the equation, as the animal welfare organisations in Rhodes implied that also a lot of hunting dogs get abandoned, whenever they become 'useless'. Then, if they come across a shepherd they are frequently killed, as the shepherds are afraid they might hurt their sheep.

An underlying reason why dogs seem to be abandoned quite 'easily' in Greece, is related to the human-dog relationship. As the results suggest, oftentimes dogs are used as 'tools' in Rhodes to guard a piece of land, protect a house or as mentioned before, to use for hunting. Thus, viewing dogs as property instead of a family member can lower the threshold to abandon these animals. Moreover, as one respondent claims, a dog does not make profit for a Greek and therefore goats and chickens are much more important here. Hence, one might argue that just like in the Roman Empire, these animals still are being classified regarding their economic value (Alves, 1999) and seeing them as 'things' corresponds with the way people thought in the Middle Ages (Lossouarn, 1905). However, as mentioned before this is mostly in rural areas. Moreover, the results also suggest that the relationship between humans and dogs is improving in Rhodes with the new generation and people are showing more affection for the canine race. Besides, although human-animal relationships might differ in Greece compared to other countries, it is rather impossible to generalise a whole population as one not caring for animals, and even observations confirmed local people petting or feeding the dogs.

### 5.2.2 Animal welfare organisations

Since the arrival of the animal welfare organisations in 2011, the situation in Rhodes has improved as these organisations are responsible for the neutering of many

animals and additionally they keep a lot of dogs off the streets and try to find them new homes. However, the findings indicate that there is lack of cooperation and communication between the different organisations and arguments about working methods even caused one organisation to split into two smaller ones. However, all organisations do agree on the fact that they have too much responsibility. This, as they argue that the government does not help and although in theory funding should come from the government and municipality (Dalla Villa et al., 2010) they depend on donations and volunteers in order to 'survive'.

### 5.2.3 Government

Although the government could not be questioned directly, the results indeed indicate that there is lack of law enforcement and as Mannhart et al. already described in 2007, the municipalities are still not addressing the roaming dog issue according to the international guidelines. Thus, although the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals demands to promote the reduction of the number of stray animals as well as educational programs (Duarte Cardoso et al., 2017), it is yet to be applied in Greece. Again, the reason can be related back to lack of money and resources due to the economic crisis, but also other priorities as for instance the refugee crisis take away the focus of the government to create a general policy and implement a dog management program. Therefore, according to one respondent the solution lies into shifting the legal responsibility from the government to the animal welfare organisations. Although this has been done in the UK and the US and even in Greece in the case of the hunting rangers, the implementation of this is rather questionable, as it means animal welfare organisations would actually gain the right to arrest people.

Moreover, according to the ICAM Coalition (2007), animal welfare NGOs should not seek the urge to take over the responsibility of authorities, unless there is a contractual agreement involved and the required (financial) resources.

### 5.2.4 Veterinarians

As discussed in dog management literature (e.g. Dalla Villa et al., 2010; WAP, 2015) another important stakeholder who's collaboration is required in order to solve the issue are the veterinarians on the island. Although occasionally they help by neutering animals for free or at a reduced rate, results show they also counteract the progress of solving the matter.

As Mannhart et al. experienced first hand during their neuter program in 2007, the local veterinarians are known to boycott foreign volunteer vets coming to the island. Although this has a negative connotation, the experts rightfully point out that it is understandable as the local veterinarians are afraid to lose clients and they also have to make a living. However, the high prices of the veterinarians in Rhodes also can be the reason why some dog owners refuse to treat their animals and although veterinarians should be looked at in a professional way, one might argue that their living should not come at the expense of animal welfare. Furthermore, instead of stimulating dog owners to neuter, vaccinate and chip their pet, results actually show that sometimes the vets fail to put the name of the owner in the system after a dog gets chipped. As a matter of fact, the Greek veterinary association is actually lobbying against reducing the price of micro-chips, even though this could lower the threshold for people to actually follow this law. Thus, according to one respondent in an ideal world the vets would have to bear legal responsibility for treating an owned animal which is not chipped.

### 5.2.5 Tourism businesses

In a tourism context, the findings illustrate it highly depends on the affection people have with dogs whether they cause a problem and consequently how people tend to deal with it.

When it comes to tourism businesses, results show they either are annoyed by the presence of free-roaming dogs or they take care of them and even want to help in order to solve the issue. However, as there is no general policy on how to deal with free-roaming dogs, everybody is 'improvising to their own perception of animal welfare'.

Therefore there are stories about hotel owners mistreating or even poisoning the animals in order to protect their business and their clients. Nonetheless, even if businesses are willing to help, the results showed there is a huge communication gap amongst the animal welfare organisations and tourism businesses, as well as lack of organization. Although the animal welfare organisations claim that no one wants to help them, all businesses spoken to argue they are willing to help but either they aren't allowed by their collaborating tour operators (due to fear of food poisoning), they offered to donate food but it was the shelter who withdrew, or they even claim they are already donating food.

Hence, findings indicate that if there was a better organized system regarding food collection, more businesses would be willing to cooperate.

Moreover, when the motivation was questioned it became clear that it is not so much the businesses that want to help, but more the people within the businesses that have an affection for dogs. Nonetheless, publicity and a good corporate image can also be a motivational factor, and it might even stimulate more businesses to collaborate, rather than poisoning dogs. Anyway, it must be recognised that businesses that indeed poison or mistreat these animals would have principally not responded to this research. Moreover, as the role and attitude of tourism businesses within this topic has never been researched before, no comparisons can be made.

### 5.2.6 Tourists

Concerning the role and attitude of tourists, the results were in line with what authors like Fennel (2012b) and Shani (2009) already implied, namely that most tourists seem to accept animals, as long as they believe that the animals are adequately taken care of. Hence, similarly to findings of Grennan and Fielding in the Bahamas (2008), interactions between tourists and animals seem to enhance the holiday experience when animal welfare is considered to be good, but when animals seem uncared for the holiday experience actually decreases and visitors are left with a bad impression of the island.

The same tendency can be recognised in the case of Rhodes, as findings suggested that most tourists seemed to welcome the dogs in Rhodes Town and liked the fact that they looked cared for, but when they come across the sick and emaciated stray dogs, they are 'shocked' and 'devastated' about what they see. In addition, observations in Rhodes Town confirmed this attitude, as multiple tourists were spotted petting the dogs that looked healthy and cared for, but when it comes to the one dog in New Town that had a visible skin condition, people took a step back and a mother told her child not to touch it, while stating "*poor doggy*". As a matter of fact, 'feeling sorry for the dogs' is an attitude noticed more often, as also in Samoa (Beckman et al. (2014) and the Bahamas (Plumridge and Fielding, 2003) findings reported this sentiment among tourists.

However, as Moorhouse et al. (2016) argue, tourists are 'inadequate assessors of animal welfare' and moreover, perspectives on animal welfare can differ between countries and cultures.

Especially if tourists are not used to seeing strays, an animal might look sick or 'poor' according to them, but perfectly fine in the eyes of the locals.

This perspective gap is proven by the fact that tourists occasionally take the community dogs of Rhodes Town back to their hotel, as they assume it is a stray that needs help, and furthermore by informing the animal welfare organisations about every dog and cat they see. Hence, even if their intention is to help, results suggest tourists can also aggravate the situation. Moreover, just like Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers (2012) experienced in Mexico, also in Rhodes tourists feeding dogs actually has a downside, as in both cases findings indicated that due to a tourism break in winter it becomes more difficult for the dogs to find food off season time.

Nonetheless, tourists also fulfil useful roles by occasionally donating or volunteering at the shelters, or similarly to the case in Mexico (Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers, 2012) by adopting dogs. Moreover, one respondent implied that tourists might even improve the situation in Rhodes, thereby suggesting the same as Ruiz-Izaguirre and Eilers (2012), albeit in a different way. As the previous authors suggest that tourists can actually improve the local perception of dog welfare, leading to a better treatment of dogs and consequently an improved tourist experience and tourism industry as a whole, findings from Rhodes suggest that it is actually the tourism industry that should be convinced to take action. This, as tourism businesses will listen to tourists because then 'money talks'. However, for this to succeed volume is needed and 'one or two complaints' will not be enough. Furthermore, it needs to be handled with care, as another respondent rightfully pointed that public pressure from abroad could easily backfire as it might come across as offensive when 'non-Greeks' come to lecture Greeks about animal welfare.

### 5.2.7 Post-travel experiences

Besides influencing at-destination tourist experiences, free-roaming dogs in Rhodes also tend to influence the post travel stage (as explained by Markwell, 2015) as findings indicated that sometimes tourists do not want to return to Rhodes because they cannot bear the sight of the strays. This confirms Alegre and Garau (2010) stating that negative circumstances on holiday can influence the intention of tourists to return to a destination in the future and that free-roaming dogs indeed can affect the destination

image and economy like Plumridge and Fielding (2003) and Alie et al. (2007) imply.

Furthermore, as Jenkins (2003) and Markwell (2015) earlier suggested, in this stage also travel decisions of others can be influenced, and as a study of Webster in 2013 implied, experiences with free-roaming dogs are frequently shared on TripAdvisor.

Hence, in order to gain more detailed insight into tourist opinions, the online sentiment about this topic was assessed by means of an analysis of TripAdvisor reviews. These findings suggest that besides dogs, also cats and donkeys are often discussed, implying the need for future research about the impact of these animals.

Nonetheless, when it comes to free-roaming dogs results show similar findings to what is already known. Namely, as long as the dogs in Rhodes seemed cared for the reviews were positive, describing the dogs as for instance 'funny', 'friendly' or 'cute'. Moreover, similarly to what was stated by Strickland (2015), also the reviews suggest that a collar is perceived as positive and an indicator that dogs are either owned or cared for by the community. However, as soon as tourists mention unhealthy, emaciated dogs or heard stories about the animals getting poisoned, hanged or mistreated the experience becomes negative as it is 'upsetting' and 'heartbreaking'. Consequently, also on TripAdvisor some tourists mention wanting to rebook their holiday or not returning to Greece anymore. Additionally, also nuisance through barking and fear of aggressive behaviour was confirmed through this analysis.

However, although some reviews mention puppies being used as a 'begging-tool' by little (gypsy) kids in Old Town, this was not observed nor mentioned by others during the field research in Rhodes.

Moreover, debate also exists about the fact that Greece has a different culture and reviewers argue that you cannot generalise a whole country and animal abuse exists everywhere.

In sum, 53% of the themes turned out to have a negative connotation, compared to 47% of the reviews that had a positive sentiment regarding free-roaming dogs in Rhodes. However, it must be recognised that in debates often the same reviewers posted things and this is not a representative image of all tourists visiting Rhodes. Nevertheless, when looking at the semantics also these results confirm that a distinction can be made when it comes to 'cared for dogs' and 'unhealthy' dogs.



Yet, whether the problem is that big that the average tourist actually sees so many 'sick dogs' is questionable, as earlier results suggested these dogs are mostly in rural areas, away from touristic places. Moreover, when looking at the annual tourist numbers of Rhodes, no direct impact on the economy can be confirmed (europetravel, 2016).

### 5.3 Dog management Rhodes

When it comes to solving the issue of free-roaming dogs, results suggest similar concepts to what is described in dog management literature. Hence, ideally a so-called 'TNR' or 'CVNR' program should be established as mentioned by authors as Reece and Chawla (2006) and Molento et al. (2007) and as already successfully implemented in Bhutan (Rinzin et al., 2016) and Bangladesh (Tenzin et al., 2015). Moreover, corresponding with OIE guidelines (2017a), the findings suggest that it is advisable to set up a working group with all relevant stakeholders who are related to and responsible for dog population management, and that agree with the mindset of the local community. However, instead of solely agreeing with the mindset of the local community, in the case of Rhodes the findings suggest that the stakeholders actually should *be* local. As theory suggests it is crucial to make every stakeholder feel ownership of the program (Kachani and Heath, 2014), in this case the local veterinarians should be convinced of their participation, rather than boycotting foreign volunteer vets. Moreover, this working group should enhance the communication and coordination between the stakeholders, especially as ICAM (2007) stresses the importance of achieving population management in the most effective way possible, due to limited resources and the responsibility of NGOs regarding their sponsors.

Additionally, the findings suggest that education is an important tool in order to change the mentality and promote responsible ownership amongst the dog owners in Rhodes. Thus, correspondingly to what Mannhart et al. already implied in 2007, one of the objectives of a control program should be to promote responsible ownership, as for instance New Zealand has applied in their management programme (Kachani and Heath, 2014).

However, dog management programs can not always be copied from other countries, as many authors in dog management literature argue that the scope of a dog-control program in a destination depends on the particular situation of free-roaming

dogs, the local attitude towards these animals and the extent to which financial resources and veterinarians are available to address the issue (e.g. ICAM, 2007; WAP, 2015; Dalla Villa et al., 2010).

Thus, although a tax system can work in countries like New Zealand (Kachani and Heath, 2014), with the economic crisis in mind this will more likely increase the risk of abandonment. Moreover, findings suggest that in the case of Rhodes this will just be 'ignored', just like the many other rules stated in the law.

Hence, education needs to go hand in hand with law enforcement, and it should be a dual 'carrot and stick' approach in order to not only change the mentality, but also stimulate desired behaviour.

In addition, besides educating dog owners this study also adds the importance of informing tourists about the cultural differences and 'do's and 'don'ts' regarding free-roaming dogs in Rhodes. Furthermore, similar to what Santos Baquero et al. (2016) describe, another method of dog population control that emerged out of the findings is to stimulate adoptions and improve the control on (illegal) dog trade. However, because in the case of Rhodes it mostly involves adoptions abroad, findings also showed that this should come with a concise framework and desires coordination on a higher level. Besides, it should be recognised that stimulating adoptions only deals with the *symptoms* of the problem instead of tackling the *cause* of the problem as ICAM (2007) so much stresses. Furthermore, results implied that although it might work in other parts of the world, Greece will definitely not be the pioneer when it comes to 'banning pet trade' in order to stimulate adoptions. However, theory does imply that the industry behind dog trade and dog products could still take its responsibility by means of limiting false expectations when it comes to dog ownership and thus limiting abandonment (Santos Baquero et al., 2016).

Finally, when it comes to the community dogs in Rhodes Town, all findings lead to the suggestion that these dogs should not be removed, not only because they are being cared for, but also because they are a 'daily reminder of the problem' as well as the only relationship some citizens will have with non-human animals. Moreover, removing them would only lead to other strays replacing them, as a direct influence of the carrying capacity as explained by Kachani and Heath (2014).







# Chapter 6

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After exploring both secondary as well as primary data, chapter six will draw conclusions for this research.

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# Conclusions

## 6.1 The situation of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes

In conclusion, the dogs in Old Town and New Town can be classified as ‘community dogs’, being well-fed, not aggressive, generally ‘healthy’ and not shy of humans. This study was unable to determine whether they were owned or unowned, but suggestions indicate that some of these dogs could indeed be pets that are allowed to roam free. Either way, it could be concluded that they are cared for and accepted within the community.

However, research determined that outside of Old Town and New Town the situation calls for a different approach. As the animal welfare organisations are dealing with the advent of new dogs and nests of abandoned puppies on a daily basis, the shelters are overcrowded and the organisations are unable to take in every single dog, mainly due to lack of human and financial resources. Especially because many dogs outside of the defined area of Rhodes Town are suffering from malnutrition, diseases, injuries and/or parasites, besides the ‘normal’ kenneling expenses treatment of these dogs is a costly matter. Thus, all animal welfare organisations have close connections with one or two vets on the island, who often give discounts. However, a general policy to address the the issue is lacking.

Yet, if unsolved, the free-roaming dogs in Rhodes continue to cause safety and health issues for the public, livestock predation and nuisance through noise and fouling. In a tourism context, tourism business and tourists also experience nuisance by means of begging behaviour and dogs barking during the night. As tourist numbers are not declining, conclusions can be drawn that free-roaming dogs have no direct effect on the economy of Rhodes. Nonetheless, online sentiment confirms that emaciated and sick dogs indeed have a negative impact for the reputation of the island and therefore affect the destination image as well.

Irresponsible dog ownership has been indicated as the number one source of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes and especially the economic crisis has been indicated as an extra trigger that causes dog owners in Rhodes to abandon their dog when they cannot take care of them anymore or to refuse to neuter, vaccinate or micro-chip their pet. Additionally, lack of understanding the benefits and the thought it might harm an animal (or its ‘nature’) or make it less productive are all contributing factors to why these interventions are often neglected.

## 6.2 The roles and attitudes of the different stakeholders

As dogs have a different purpose in Greece than solely companionship, these cultural differences need to be taken in mind. Results showed that oftentimes dogs are ‘used’ in Rhodes for guarding premises or livestock, or to take for hunting. Moreover, the mentality that dogs are ‘dirty’ or ‘scary’ seems to stem from a long line of human-dog relationships in Greece. This relationship automatically seems to lower the threshold for dog owners to abandon their pet or mistreat these animals.

Even so, it must be stated that the population in Rhodes cannot be generalised and there are indeed locals who care for the dogs and act ‘responsibly’, and this attitude is increasing within the new generations.

Then again irresponsible dog ownership is a fact and it seems to be going hand in hand with the role of the vets. This, as it came to show that some veterinarians fail to properly register the dogs in the database and continue to lobby for high fees, rather than stimulating responsible ownership by their clients.

Moreover, strong veterinary associations in Rhodes have made it clear that volunteer vets who come and neuter the dogs are not appreciated, as local

veterinarians are afraid to lose clients and therefore lose income.

Also the local authorities in Rhodes have not been able to stimulate responsible ownership as currently laws are not adequately enforced and punishments are often withdrawn due to 'eased circumstances'. However, it could be concluded that as long as Greece keeps dealing with economical and political crises, it is unlikely that priority will be given to the 'stray dog problem'. Therefore the animal welfare organisations all have the feeling that they have too much responsibility and no one wants to help when it comes to solving the issue of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes.

In contrary, tourism businesses claim wanting to help, but lack of organization and communication between the animal welfare organisations and tourism businesses is making it more difficult to realise it. Especially businesses that offer food are experiencing nuisance from the dogs and as there is no general policy what to do when an issue with a free-roaming dog occurs, all tourism businesses are handling it according to their own perception of animal welfare. This means, occasionally these animals get poisoned or harmed.

Also tourists do not know what to do when coming across a roaming canine and sometimes dilemmas occur due to a mismatch in perception. This, as for some tourists in Rhodes it is difficult to understand the concept of community dogs, let alone sick and emaciated stray dogs. Therefore, tourists occasionally go home with sad memories about their holiday in Rhodes. Nonetheless, conclusions could be drawn that as long as the dogs are generally healthy and cared for, most tourists seem to welcome the strays. On top of that, sometimes tourists fulfil a valuable role by donating or volunteering at the shelter or even by adopting a dog from Rhodes.

### 6.3 Dog management Rhodes

Although the animal welfare organisations have improved the situation since their arrival in 2011, when it comes to dog management in Rhodes, still a lot has to happen as there is currently no policy nor dog management programme. Even though the shelters are over-crowded, euthanasia has been defined as unethical and all respondents agreed with expert guidelines saying that the *source* of the problem needs to be tackled, rather than solely dealing with the *symptoms*.

Because irresponsible ownership is the number one source of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes, ideally, abandonment should be countered and all free-roaming dogs would be neutered in order to prevent new dogs entering the existing population.

Therefore, respondents indicated education as a key element of a dog management program in order to change the mentality of dog owners. Especially children were identified as an important target group, as all respondents settled their hopes on the 'new generation'. Hence, when it comes to changing human-dog relationships, schools were identified as an important stakeholder. However, results also showed that in order to change the mentality a dual approach is needed, with education on one hand but (improved) law enforcement on the other hand.

Also the role of veterinarians was mentioned when asked how dog management should be implemented in Rhodes, as all respondents argued they should take their responsibility informing dog owners about responsible dog ownership and neuter more dogs.

Consequently, a TNR-program was initiated as the only humane way of population control. However, for this to be realised facts and figures of the total dog population are needed, as well as input from all relevant stakeholders. In this case the university was mentioned as a relevant stakeholder, as input from university students would generate an academic basis which simultaneously could help convince the authorities of the importance of such a project.

Moreover, stimulating adoptions was recognised as an element of dog management as well. Although adoptions do not tackle the source of the problem, it is still a relevant way to empty the shelters and reduce the amount of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes. Especially as the shelter life has been identified as being not ideal, every dog that gets adopted would gain a second chance in life, and simultaneously make place for new ones to get off the streets. However, when it comes to adoptions abroad difficulties occur and this process requires coordination on a higher level in order to ensure no illegal practices happen and dogs do not end up in the shelter in other countries anyway.

Additionally, pet shops and breeders were identified as another relevant stakeholder, and some respondents even mentioned a ban on pet trade. Although this is not very realistic, an improved control on (illegal) dog trade could be an extra component of a dog management program in Rhodes and in an ideal case, pet shops too would take their responsibility in order to prevent false expectations of pet ownership.

Finally, in a tourism context, this study also showed the importance of informing tourists about the do's and don'ts regarding free-roaming dogs in Rhodes. Moreover, as tourism businesses are affected, this study adds a role for tourism businesses when it comes to the realisation of dog management as well.

### 6.4 Stakeholder network

All in all, research determined that the issue of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes and its management is indeed a multi-stakeholder approach and all stakeholders are connected, not only to the dogs but oftentimes also to each other.

In essence it is all a matter of 'interplay' and the stakeholder network shows the interrelatedness of all actors involved. Hence, it is the government that should make and enforce the laws, but the dog owners that should obey these rules and vets, schools and even pet shops that should inform dog owners about the actual importance of responsible ownership. Even the abandoned hunting dogs seemed to have an effect on the (livestock) of the shepherds.

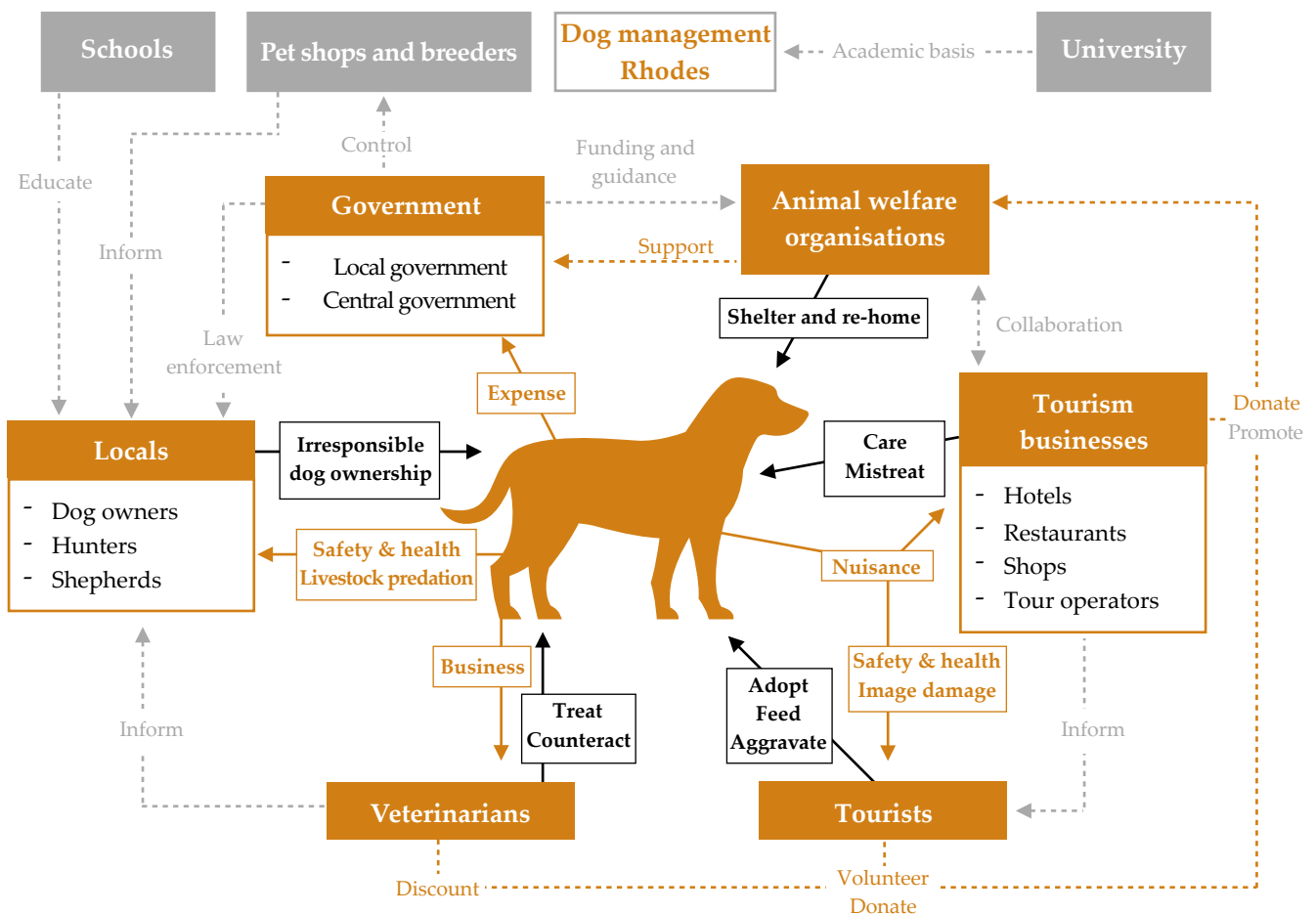
Moreover, the actions of tourists also seemed to have a direct consequence for actors such as tourism businesses (through feeding) and the animal welfare organisations (by taking the dogs and constant messaging, but also by donating and adopting). On the other hand, the stance of tourism businesses could also have an effect on (the actions of) tourists and findings indicated their relation with the animal welfare organisations as well.

Besides, the more vets that neuter and treat the dogs will automatically lead to a decrease of concerns like nuisance, health threats and image damage for the other actors.

The stakeholders and their relationships are illustrated in the model below. The bold arrows in the middle show the effect free-roaming dogs have on the stakeholders and vice versa. Surrounding 'broken' arrows show the interrelations between all the different actors. The roles that are symbolised with a grey colour, identify an ideal situation, according to dog management literature and the findings, but do not visualise the reality in Rhodes (yet).

The next chapter will illustrate which steps should be taken to actually realise dog management in Rhodes.

Figure 6.1 | Stakeholder network







# Chapter 7

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Based on the report of the expert meeting regarding dog management in Italy in 2011 (FAO, 2014) and the insight the expert interviews have provided, the following chapter illustrates the recommendations, in a political, economical, social and local context of Rhodes.

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# Recommendations

## 7.1 Government

Government input requires operation on different levels and according to FAO (2014), priorities need to be determined at international, national, regional and local levels.

Even though on national level rules and regulations have been made in order to stimulate responsible ownership and improve animal welfare in Greece, research has shown that when it comes to the actual implementation, the authorities in Rhodes have not been able to implement this adequately. Moreover, a general policy as well as a dog management program is lacking. Keeping in mind the financial and political situation, the following sections illustrate the recommendations for this stakeholder group, thereby focusing on the *local government* of Rhodes.

### 7.1.1 Working group stakeholders

The initial step, which the government authority should be responsible for (ICAM, 2007), is to bring together all relevant stakeholders in a working group in order to develop a **dog management program**. This includes the animal welfare organisations on the island, government services like waste and environment management, veterinary services, universities and schools, local media, and in this case also shepherds and hunters and representatives of the tourism industry and destination management organisations (like Rodos Tourism Promotion Organisation).

Although municipalities usually implement dog management practices as a reaction to incidents or events like elections, FAO (2014) stresses the importance of establishing a long-term investment and strategic plan. Moreover, consultation between all stakeholders at all levels is essential for the success of a dog management program, with in specific the cooperation between the municipality and the animal welfare organisations.

The elements that should be involved in a long-term local dog management program in Rhodes are explained in the following sections.

### 7.1.2 Policy and legislation

For starters, a general policy regarding dog management should be made that is clear and direct implementable.

According to experts in the field of dog management, (FAO, 2014), policies and legislation should provide a framework for the implementation of dog management and who is responsible. It could be included in an existing Animal Welfare Protection or Animal Welfare Act, or it may stand alone. Either way, animal welfare principles should be clearly described and ideally, key policies should be established for different categories including pet ownership, breeding and selling, abandonment and stray animals.

Legislation should be based on evidence and contextualised. It is advisable to include legal and technical experts when formulating legislation in order to ensure that legislation and policies not only correspond with the local context, but are also implementable. Moreover, relevant regulations and recommendations from international organisations such as the Council of Europe, FAO, OIE and WAP should be incorporated into local policies as well.

During a dog management program, consultations on a regular basis are recommended in order to keep policies up to date and in line with national politics. If needed, policies and legislation need to be amended based on changes over time or lessons learned from past dog management activities. Especially as dog management is a long-term process, including civil servants who maintain their position and are not influenced by election periods can contribute positively to the realisation and implementation of more sustainable interventions.

Lastly, as authorities initially represent the (best) interest of the local citizens, it is recommended to link specific cultural attitudes and societal issues to safety, environment and animal welfare policies in order to establish an effective and sustainable dog management policy based on evidence (FAO, 2014).

In order to ensure long-term behavioural changes, legislation and rules need to be explained in clear and simple language in order for the public to understand. Expert opinions (FAO, 2014) recommend to establish clear guidelines like codes of practice (COP) to support translating legal regulations into actual behaviour. Accordingly, these guidelines can provide a framework to define the minimum and ideal standards of dog care for owners, breeding practices and shelters, and in this case also professions that 'use' dogs like the hunters and shepherds. Regarding professionals that are engaged in dog management (like the veterinarians) so-called standard operating procedures (SOPs) could be applied, especially if their actions are integrated in the legislation. Moreover, it is highly recommended to ensure that penalties are actually given when the laws are violated, as this not only stimulates desired behaviour, but will also be a source of income to finance dog management activities. However, it must be noted that the main focus of law enforcement should be stimulating behaviour changes. Therefore, this should be handled with care in order to prevent dog management legislation from becoming a 'money business', as this will only have a counterproductive effect and will decrease public understanding and support.

The fact that ARNGO 'Lucky Paws' has lawyers in its team could be a valuable contribution and therefore collaboration would be recommended.

In sum, responsible dog ownership and dog management should be integrated into dog-related legislation and its implementation should be stimulated through enforcement, but also education. Therefore, legislation goes hand in hand with an educational program, which will be explained in the following section.

### 7.1.3 Educational campaign

Because irresponsible dog ownership is the number one source of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes, responsible ownership should be encouraged through public awareness and education.

For starters, the public should be made aware of the actual consequences of abandoning or mistreating dogs.

Moreover, awareness of diseases and other risks that occur when dogs are not properly vaccinated or treated should be increased, as well as the benefits of neutering and registering.

According to the experts (FAO, 2014), awareness-building messages need to portray the fact that irresponsible ownership actually costs you more, whether it is in fines or loss of social capital (as a consequence of conflicts with neighbours). Besides, it should be made clear that acting responsibly will contribute to the overall health and well-being of the society.

However, not only the consequences of irresponsible dog ownership should be addressed in an educational campaign, but perhaps more importantly also how to be a good dog owner and what it actually means to take care of a dog. Therefore, it is recommended to raise awareness on pet costs and responsibilities as well as the disadvantages of puppy mills and in-breeding. Additionally, also non-dog owners should be made aware how to treat (stray) dogs in general.

Especially children were defined to be an important target group when it comes to education, as all respondents settled their hopes on the 'new generation' and furthermore they are a significant target group when it comes to (impulse) pet purchases and their vulnerability to dog bites (FAO, 2014).

Thus, where possible it is recommended to include responsible dog ownership and animal welfare messages into existing school curricula and official channels of education. As there is no need to re-invent the wheel, guidance tools can be derived from organisations like STRAY-AFP, who made education booklets in different languages (including Greek), free to download at <http://www.stray-afp.org/nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/01/education-book-Grieks.pdf>.

Additionally, other education and information platforms need to be explored, such as television, radio, social media networks, but also relevant companies in the pet (food) industry, as they often have marketing teams with the right experience and resources. Furthermore, key points in the life of a dog create ideal moments to educate dog owners about responsible ownership, which already begins at the point of purchase at a pet shop (or adoption at a shelter) and continues with trusted professionals like veterinarians or public health officials who should also give advice about responsible ownership.

One low-cost example further given by the experts is by putting messages on utility bills and receipts from ATMs, which has already successfully been implemented in Brazil (FAO, 2014). Moreover, possibilities to spread the message could lie within community groups like youth groups, Rhodes Rotary club or Rhodes Lions clubs or celebrities as usually they have influence among a great amount of followers.

Either way, these messages need to be clear and preferably positive, encouraging responsible dog ownership but without putting dogs in a bad light. Furthermore, consistency among the various communication channels is a must. Therefore, the experts advise a consultation group “where different organizations involved in educational campaigning can discuss and agree on messaging” (FAO, 2014, p. 36).

#### **7.1.4 Animal control officers**

Simply given the fact that there is no point in making policies and regulations on paper if they will not be applied in practice, it is advised to appoint animal welfare control officers. Thus, it is recommended to invest in proper training and guidance in order to appoint officers who will be responsible for the enforcement and education of animal welfare in Rhodes. Simultaneously these officers can serve as a contact service for whenever there is an issue with free-roaming dogs. Then, if businesses or for instance shepherds experience problems due to nuisance of the dogs, they are able to contact somebody instead of taking matters into own hands by means of poisoning or harming the animals. This profession can be combined with other practices and can be either government employed, private individuals or employed by an NGO (FAO, 2014).

#### **7.1.5 Regional dog register**

If supported by a licensing fee, registration systems can generate income for dog management activities and a possibility to reward certain behaviours, such as neutering (FAO, 2014). Although an annual tax system will not work in Rhodes, due to an increased chance of abandonment, a one time registration fee at the time of purchase from a pet shop or breeder could provide income and at the same time reduce the chance of impulse pet purchases, while making adopting more appealing.

Once awareness has been raised about the importance of microchips, a regional database would offer a solution to structure and standardise operational procedures at regional level.

As keeping registration information up to date can be a challenge, it is recommended to make the process as easy as possible and to make it compulsory. This means making the registration process possible for multiple professions including private veterinarians, shelter staff and government authorities and introducing laws that make registration obligatory with fines for those who fail to do so (FAO, 2014).

## **7.2 Animal welfare organisations**

The second most important stakeholder group when it comes to dog management are the local animal welfare organisations, as they are directly involved in its implementation. Besides supporting the local authorities, the results showed that also between the animal welfare organisations a better cooperation is needed and although working methods might differ, they should strive for the same goal together.

### **7.2.1 Advocacy campaign**

In order to convince politicians about the importance of a dog management program, it is advisable to set up an advocacy campaign. Ideally, public pressure should come locally and assessing public opinion is not only useful to highlight the importance of dog management to politicians, but simultaneously helps to determine which interventions are most suitable in a local context. Expert recommendations define different strategies to attract the attention of politicians, civil servants and decision makers by including topics as “public health, cost savings, vote-winning, ethical/animal welfare/social responsibility arguments and international pressure” (FAO, 2014, p. 33).

Additionally, assistance should be sought by university (students), as insight into facts and figures and an academic basis will increase the validity of proof and arguments to explain the importance of dog management to local authorities.

### **7.2.2 Stimulate adoptions**

Ideally shelters should be a transit place and lifelong sheltering is not an actual solution. In theory, using the term ‘holding facilities’ opposed to ‘shelters’ is preferred as the latter gives the impression that these facilities aim to provide lifelong care (FAO, 2014).

Nonetheless, as far as practically possible, it should be made sure that all dogs in the shelters are meeting the standards of the five freedoms and when animals are in a poor welfare state, proper action should be taken.

Therefore, it is recommended to have a clear policy on euthanasia and to establish guidelines to ensure that no dogs have to suffer. However, every effort should be made to eliminate the need for euthanasia as much as possible and euthanising healthy dogs can be seen as both unethical as well as providing the 'wrong' message (of how to get rid of unwanted dogs) to the public.

In order to decrease the amount of dogs in the shelter, adoptions should be promoted and the process should be made as easy as possible, eliminating unnecessary paperwork. Moreover, it is recommended that all dogs are dewormed, sterilised, vaccinated and microchipped before adoption (FAO, 2014).

When possible, it is recommended to invest in dog training, socialising and grooming as this all will have a positive influence on the actual re-homing process. Moreover, adoption itself should be promoted and awareness should be raised about the benefits of adopting, including the message that shelter dogs cost less and are 'just as good' as purebred dogs, and even come with fewer health risks. It is advisable to create one coherent channel on social media (instead of having multiple ones as now is the case) and to promote all shelter dogs in Rhodes via a single platform as this increases the reach for publicity and provides an organised system. Moreover, possibilities for partnerships should be explored in order to promote shelter dogs (for instance at pet stores or veterinary services). Because the animal welfare organisations consist mostly of foreigners from different European countries, it is also advised to seek connections with home-countries in order to promote and arrange adoptions in an organised way.

However, promotion in Rhodes should always be done without providing the address of the shelter, as this will only work as a magnet for more dogs to be dumped here. Moreover, responsibility should be taken to ensure these dogs end up in 'good' places as well and everyone that adopts a dog from the shelter needs to be informed and advised about responsible dog ownership as well.

### **7.2.3 Collaboration tourism businesses**

Lastly, it is recommendable for all animal welfare organisations to explore the possibilities to create a system for food collection and other ways of collaboration with tourism businesses that indicate wanting to help. Food collection could be realised e.g. by agreeing on particular times and dates for when food will be picked up and by establishing guidelines

in order to ascertain food that is poisonous or harmful will not be included. In return, animal welfare organisations could generate positive publicity via their (social media) networks for every business that donates food or money, or helps them in any other way.

## **7.3 Veterinarians**

Vets are an important stakeholder when it comes to dog management as well, as they have to make sure the dogs are properly treated and should be part of the educational campaign as well. Moreover, they are the key player when it comes to reproduction control.

### **7.3.1 Inform**

As has been noted, it is recommended for all veterinarians in Rhodes to inform their clients about the importance of vaccinations, neutering and microchips as well as to educate and advice them about responsible dog ownership. Moreover, cultural barriers need to be addressed and veterinarians should explain their clients that these interventions do not harm an animal or interfere with its 'nature' and it will not affect hunting or guarding behaviour.

### **7.3.2 Reproduction control**

Because local veterinarians in Rhodes are afraid to lose business and clients to foreign volunteer vets, it is recommended to participate in local neuter programs. Although currently some veterinarians already help and assist the animal welfare organisations, it is advised to establish a committee with as many veterinarians on the island as possible and come to mutual agreements on how to tackle the issue of free-roaming dogs. This includes agreements about how often and against which costs dogs should be neutered, while making a distinction between owned and unowned dogs.

According to the guidelines of Dogs Trust and Battersea Dogs & Cats Home (2008) it is advisable to put the major focus on female dogs, as females are usually the determining factor when it comes to reproductive capacity. This, as it only takes a few un-neutered males to impregnate several female dogs. Therefore, even neutering a proportional part of the male population may not lead to a decrease of the overall population. However, if a great amount of female dogs are spayed, less dogs will be able to breed, thus decreasing the total dog population.



Yet, even though female sterilisation should be the priority, neutering males also has advantages, as it reduces aggressive and territorial behaviour, decreases the risk of several cancers and at the same time serves as visible proof to the community that the problem is being dealt with (Dogs Trust and Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, 2008).

Although there is no general rule for how many dogs need to be neutered in order to control and stabilise the total population, WAP (former known as WSPA) suggest a coverage of 70% (WPSA, 2007b).

Moreover, it is strongly recommended for local veterinarians of Rhodes to still communicate with the foreign volunteer vets and also here to come to mutual agreements or even partnerships. In this case, the foreign volunteer vets could take upon the role of advising and assisting the local veterinarians in Rhodes. Furthermore, training veterinarians to perform fast and inexpensive neutering techniques will reduce costs and therefore lower the threshold for dog owners to neuter their pets, while still ensuring income for the vets. To save time and costs, it is recommended to treat every dog that is being neutered at the same time with vaccines and parasite treatments in order to decrease health risks. Where possible, opportunities for financial contributions should be explored in collaboration with the local authorities and animal welfare organisations.

## 7.4 Locals

As Rhodes will have people who care for animal (welfare) as well, it is recommended to join the advocacy campaign (as described in section 7.2.1) and provide local authorities with public pressure, but also insight into local concerns.

Moreover, in the case of the community dogs in Rhodes Town, it is not recommended to stop feeding the dogs, as they have become reliant on it in order to survive. However, feeding dogs should be avoided around businesses or other people's premises and it should be restricted to designated areas in order to minimise conflicts with neighbours. Additionally, safe interaction with all free-roaming dogs should be encouraged and threatening behaviour (like throwing stones or shouting) is discouraged as humans signals are known to influence dog behaviour and it might trigger an aggressive response.

### 7.4.1 Dog owners

As the most effective way of dog management is for all dogs to be responsibly owned, the actions of dog owners are of crucial importance. According to expert guidelines (FAO, 2014) and customised to the local context, dog owners in Rhodes are advised to implement the following key points of responsible ownership:

- 🐾 Meeting the dog's basic needs including food, water, shelter and social needs
- 🐾 Preventive health care including vaccination and de-worming. In the case of Rhodes repellent collars are recommended to prevent tick-borne and diseases like leishmania and lichia
- 🐾 Treatment if a dog is sick or wounded
- 🐾 Recognising the lifelong commitment and cost of caring for a dog so that acquisition is a serious consideration and the right dog is chosen carefully
- 🐾 Identification (collar with tag) and registration
- 🐾 Reproduction control to prevent unwanted puppies

Where possible, dog proof fences serve as a solution for dogs to be outdoors, while remaining under supervision. When still allowing dogs to roam, owners need to minimise risks to the community and accept responsibility in the event of an incident (FAO, 2014). Therefore, it is recommended to socialise the dogs. This can either be done by following a 'puppy training course', but also by retrieving information online or in books and practicing at home.

### 7.4.2 Shepherds and hunters

For these stakeholders it is advised to take part of the working group and address concerns regarding their profession (in combination with the dogs) in order to come to mutual agreements. Codes of practice as well as how to treat (free-roaming) dogs should be discussed.

## 7.5 Tourism businesses

As results showed that the tourism industry is also involved and affected by the (issue of) free-roaming dogs in Rhodes, this stakeholder group could step in and play a role towards solving the issue. Besides the fact that a reduced dog population will eliminate nuisance and client complaints, taking part in dog management activities could also benefit the corporate image and create positive publicity. Thus if financially possible, sponsoring a local dog management program is recommended.

### 7.5.1 Help animal welfare organisations

Because many tourism businesses claim wanting to help but do not know how, an organized system in Rhodes should fix the lines between the animal welfare organisations and tourism businesses on the island. Thus, it is recommended to enhance communication efforts with this stakeholder group. Furthermore, businesses could also help the strays by placing money donation boxes or participating in fundraisers or other events.

### 7.5.2 Inform

Moreover, it is advised to inform tourists about free-roaming dogs and what (not) to do when coming across a roaming canine. This should be done in all stages, beginning with tour operators who should include this information in their pre-departure brochures. In this case, when booking a trip tourists will be informed beforehand about the difference between community dogs and stray dogs and what they should do in each situation. Also, guidelines for volunteering, donating or adoption could be included. Besides, also tourism businesses in Rhodes should take their responsibility and provide their guests with proper information about this issue in order to minimise misunderstandings and dilemmas.

For hotels this could be implemented by placing brochures in the lobby. Additionally, these brochures could promote the shelter (dogs) and inform tourists about the ways in which they could help. Especially as the law forbids dogs near places where food is prepared and in order to reduce nuisance from begging dogs, it is advised for restaurants to discourage feeding behaviour. In this case, information could be implemented in the menu card.

Although little nuisance was experienced for shops, also these businesses could place brochures if they feel the need to inform customers. Especially because almost all the shops sell animal-related products, sometimes even literally promoting 'the strays of Greece' (on calendars or mugs e.g.), it is advised to maintain a positive image when it comes to these animals.

Where possible, businesses could join a committee and establish a 'tourist educational campaign' together, in order to ensure consistency in the message.

## 7.6 Tourists

When it comes to tourists, it is recommended to stop feeding the stray animals directly in or near tourism businesses, as this behaviour may not be welcomed by business owners. This, as the dogs may cause nuisance and consequently can lead to business owners poisoning or mistreating the animals as a response to 'solve' the problem. Moreover, when adopting dogs it is recommended to make sure the (health of the) dog meets all the requirements and it is properly taken care of.

## 7.7 Future research

Although this research took the first step in assessing the issue of free-roaming dogs in Rhodes and providing solutions for dog management, future research is needed in order to fill information gaps and provide a basis for its realisation.

### 7.7.1 Facts and figures

In order to implement a dog management program in Rhodes, additional research is required in order to gain more insight into facts and figures about the size and distribution of dog populations on the entire island. Moreover, it is advised to assess whether these dogs are mainly owned or unowned, as strategies may differ (as owned dog populations should be mainly addressed by increasing public awareness while unowned populations ask for more extensive neuter programs). Additionally, the local attitude towards community dogs or stray dogs outside of Rhodes Town should be assessed, in order to determine whether it is safe to actually return the dogs onto the streets after they are neutered.

### 7.7.2 Cost-benefit analysis

Besides, before the implementation of a dog management program it is advised to carry out a cost-benefit analysis, in order to improve understanding among the public as well as the authorities. Especially as these interventions benefit from public and charitable funds, it is advised to measure the progress over time to ensure accountability towards donors and stakeholders.

### 7.7.3 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluating the progress of dog management activities is generally recommended as this creates insight into areas for improvement and which activities actually worked.

### 7.7.4 Cats and donkeys

Lastly, this research pointed out that not only free-roaming dogs, but also cats and the donkeys in Lindos may ask for future research about the impacts on the destination and its tourism industry. On top of that, this topic could be extended to research in other parts of Greece in order to clarify whether it is a national problem and where differences occur. This will simultaneously shape insight into national strategies and give input for national policies.

## 7.8 General recommendations

Ultimately, this paragraph will address solutions that are generally recommended for countries that experience issues with free-roaming dog populations.

### 7.8.1 International expertise and guidelines

As at the planning stage difficulties can occur concerning lack of government interest, insufficient resources as well as insufficient research and understanding, combined with different opinions of how to actually address the issue, it is recommended to consult international guidelines and engage with international bodies that have both the expertise as well as experience in the field of dog management. This, as intergovernmental organisations like FAO or OIE can assist politicians and public officials and support local strategies according to international guidelines. Additionally, also international organisations like World Animal Protection or the ICAM Coalition can assist politicians in developing strategies.

### 7.8.2 One Health Approach

In general, it is recommended to follow a 'One Health' approach, which means government ministries of health, agriculture, environment, education, and in a tourism context also the ministry of tourism, should be included, as this will lead to improved policy and legislation and ensures wider intergovernmental political support and funding.

Although initially a One Health approach arises from concerns of zoonotic diseases, this concept can be expanded to "dog bites, nuisance behaviours, the impact on wildlife, farm animals, the environment and the welfare of the dogs themselves" (FAO, 2014, p. 15).

### 7.8.3 Dog trade control

It is advised for the government to improve the control on (illegal) dog trade and puppy mills as well as to reduce the cost price of microchips in order to lower the threshold for registration. Moreover, on a higher international (European) level, a framework should be established when it comes to adoptions abroad and agreements should be made with other countries when it comes to the export and import of dogs.

Ideally, all traveling dogs are microchipped so they can be traced. Also, a system could be arranged between shelters in different destinations that relocate 'well adoptable dogs'. This way, people can go to their own local shelter and choose a dog, instead of selecting it from a picture online.

### 7.8.4 Leishmania

Lastly, for countries where leishmania is prevalent, the experts advise to implement measures including the control of the insect vector, health education and stimulating preventive interventions (such as vaccines and repellent collars) and improvement of diagnostic methods (FAO, 2014).



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The references provide a detailed list of each source which is mentioned throughout the dissertation.

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