



## Veterinary discipline in Boa Vista enter the 21st century

### Introduction to the topic

We don't want to start boring you with repeating what our main goals are, but on these two basic objectives, we have had a lot to do:

- *dog and feline population control;*
- *high quality of vet treatments.*

But let us start with our first one. A couple of weeks ago we passed the 2000 sterilisations mark. If you want to make an annual average, that means almost 500 sterilisations per year. Of course, we can be proud of this, but we are missing one key figure: how many dogs really live on the island?

In January, Nathalie and Spartaco were invited to the Municipal Chamber of Boa Vista (later CMBV). The theme was the now recurring 'dogs kill goats'. Evidently this problem is a constant on every Cape Verdean island. Basically, the local authorities ask us to help eradicate this calamity. We gladly make ourselves available for this kind of collaboration. Unfortunately, the CMBV is unable to answer questions that are fundamental for us: how many dogs are there on the island? How many goats have been killed in the last 12 months?

Speaking instead of the second objective, since the beginning of our existence as an association on the island of Boa Vista, we have always focused on the quality of our treatments. Our facility is state-of-the-art, but we lacked a few elements to be at the top of our game and to achieve faster results. In fact, the area of laboratory analysis was our weak point. Of course, we could continue to depend on an external laboratory, but unfortunately not 24 hours a day.

### Animal population control

As explained in the introduction, in Cape Verde it particularly suffers from the difficult coexistence of dogs and goats. Basically, the problem lies in the management of the two species. The local culture does not help.

On the one hand, the too much freedom given to the dogs and on the other, the little protection given to the goats, mean that accidents multiply. Owners of large numbers of goats let them live in total freedom and without control. Upon arrival on the island, one should not be surprised by the presence of goats around the airport terminal, at the roadside or near the island's dream beaches.

Similarly, walking around in built-up areas, one can easily realise that dogs live mainly in the street and with little or no supervision.

In the discussion with the CMBV, we addressed a culturally difficult topic: responsibility. It is always the other person's fault. This affects dog owners as well as goat owners.

A lot of solutions could be invented, but the only applicable way out is two interventions: dogs under control and protected goats. What is most strange is that the island's code of conduct (Codego de postura) exists on the subject. Everything is regulated there. Nothing to invent, only implementation is missing. This regulation is from 2015 and nobody uses it. Clearly the strict implementation of this regulation has side effects on political life: unpopularity.

How can we help? Well, we start by getting an idea of how many dogs there are on the island. Let's see how many dogs have owners and register them on a database.

March April, we held several information sessions on the subject of dog population control. We met all kinds of representatives: dog owners and goat owners, going from village to village. From August, we started, with the collaboration of CMBV, to microchip dogs with owners.





The first village that has been served is Cabeça dos Tarafes and, to date, we have finished all the villages and only the most populated centres are missing: Rabil and Sal Rei.

Although the Nerina association has already exceeded 2000 neutered animals, this dog register also allows us to observe the proportions of dogs we have already sterilised. As a result, we realise that in some parts of the island we have to put emphasis on decreasing the birth rate. Slowly but surely, we are nearing the 21<sup>st</sup> century also in the dogs population management.

### Improvements on the treatments

Over the past few years, we have been fortunate to have several veterinary visits with annual experience. Who in the general field and who in specific topics such as orthopaedics. Each visit has given us a development, a contribution or a fundamental help in the development of the installations or of the resources.



We can take the first example with Ercole Parodi from Brescia. He helped a lot Laura to install the gas narcosis and supported from Italy in many difficult situations. Not to mention that he was happily exulting with one of our turtles, patient of the moment.

Another contributor to the growth of our clinic is undoubtedly Maria De la Morena. We remember her working hard to save one imported dog and always pushing Laura to



do more or doing things that are so obvious in Europe, but for sure an absolutely innovation on the island.



Another stay that has made us progress is certainly the stay of Alice Matos for a few weeks. Portuguese student in veterinary, she introduced us to a system of possible collaborations with students towards the end of their internship. You can easily understand that anyone willing and with a minimum of veterinary knowledge can help us.

In May, we had the pleasure to receive the visit of the professor from the animal health department of University Complutense of Madrid Doctor Mirò Guadalupe, specialist on vector borne diseases and zoonosis, Checa Rocio, another veterinary specialist and part of the team of

Dr Guadalupe laboratory, and our lovely super vet Maria de la Morena, as mentioned above, is not the first time that she collaborates with us.

So, with this incredible team we had a really important mission: take blood of a representative quantity of dogs of the island to understand the diseases transmitted by vectors (as ticks). Ehrlichia canis, of course was present in almost all the dogs sampled, but we also analysed another 3 diseases with surprising results. In the clinic we realize that the majority of canine mortality is linked to this disease and its side effects. In fact, we suspect side effects such as kidney, liver, nervous system and digestive system malfunction are directly liable to the ehrlichia canis. Our desire is to understand how to prevent all these misfortunes. With the help of the team of Dr Guadalupe we are try to find a good and supportable solution.





So, we improvised a mobile clinic to do this blood takes. Our goal was more than 100 samples. We had not a lot of time to collect all the samples we wanted and some villages are about 10-20 km of distance from our clinic. We went to the bairro Boa Esperança in Sal Rei, to Rabil (where we use the garage of a beautiful house of an Italian family that they even opened their house to offer a fantastic lunch after work), to Estancia de Baixo, Fundo das Figueiras and Joao Galego.



The reception of the people was amazing. After few minutes we arrived, we had the owners with their animals waiting for the blood check. As usually, the kids were the most curious and participatory. At the end, we did more than 130 blood samples. This result is very interesting for us and, most relevant, is very important for the study of the University of Madrid.

This study did not start this year. We have been monitoring Ehrlichiosis cases for two years now by sending the results and samples to Madrid. To understand and deepen all the misfortunes related to this basic disease, in recent years, mainly with the help of Maria De La Morena, we have obtained a second-hand machine for the biochemical analysis of blood. It was the first step to “construct” our laboratory. With this visit, we were able to bring from Spain the hemogram machine! This is a very important improvement for the diary activities of the clinic. Now we can do hemogram and

biochemical blood analysis.

For our vet, you cannot imagine how important is to have these machines. With this she can understand and diagnosticate the diseases in the animals and use the medicine knowledge and no using imagination or assumptions because the means are limited.

During these 4 years we were slowly and piece by piece, improving our means, to give the chance of the animals, being closer to the veterinary medicine of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Future

In summary, towards the end of the current year, we will have a fairly accurate idea of the number of dogs that make up the canine population of the island. On the other hand, as you have read, the progress in our work is constant. It is and it will always remain our fixed idea: latest generation care and the top of materials and installations.

We would like to find more supporters in order to finance the increase of our capacity to react in trauma situations. In fact, trauma is unfortunately a constant. We dream of being able to operate in the area of fractures or thoracic trauma.

Every dream can become reality with you.

Thank you all for your help and thank you for the help you can still give us.

Vet. Laura Peteiro Sanchez

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