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Perceptions of Village Dogs by Villagers and Tourists in the Coastal Region of Rural Oaxaca, Mexico

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Abstract:

The objective of this study was to gain an understanding of the village dog-keeping system, and of perceptions of dog-related problems by villagers and tourists, in the coastal region of Oaxaca, Mexico. We conducted a survey of the inhabitants of three villages (Mazunte, Puerto Angel, and Río Seco), whose main economic activities were tourism, fishing, and farming ($n = 99$), and a survey of tourists ($n = 151$). Dogs were the most commonly kept animals in all the villages. Cultural and economic aspects were reflected in dog-keeping practices. All dog owners allowed their dog(s) to roam free in the farming village (Río Seco), but not in the tourist villages (Mazunte and Puerto Angel). Significantly more dog owners in the tourist village of Mazunte mentioned companionship as a reason for keeping dogs than those in the farming village. All villagers perceived as a problem that there were too many dogs. The mean number of dogs per household was 1.8, and there were significantly more male dogs in the farming village than in the tourist villages. Efforts to control the dog population in the rural coastal region are aimed at rabies prevention or wildlife protection, whereas this study revealed that these issues were far less often mentioned by local people as other dog-related problems. Significantly more villagers in the tourist villages perceived there to be dog-welfare problems than those in the farming village. Significantly more North American and European tourists were concerned about dog welfare than Mexican tourists. Despite significant differences in dog-keeping between the tourist and farming villages, opinions of villagers in regard to dog breeding and methods of dog population control were similar. Villagers agreed on dog sterilization to control the dog population, but also considered that female dogs should breed at least once in their lifetime. Those living in tourist villages could benefit from improving dog welfare and implementing strategies to lessen the problems dogs cause tourists.

Keywords: [DOG](#); [DOG-KEEPING](#); [DOG WELFARE](#); [MEXICO](#)

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