



ROMANIA

A SYSTEM THAT FAILS DOGS

Understanding Romania's 14-Working-Day Shelter Period,
Shelter Crisis and the Need for Humane, Long-Term Solutions

Thousands of healthy, unclaimed dogs in Romania face euthanasia after the statutory 14-working-day shelter period. This briefing examines the law, the reality on the ground and the urgent need for humane, effective and sustainable solutions.



The legal framework governing stray dog management



The 14-working-day shelter period and how it operates



Conditions inside public shelters



Documented concerns and the human and ethical cost



Reforms needed to protect dogs and communities



DOG DESK ANIMAL ACTION

monitors and reports on the global impact of stray dog population management policies. This briefing forms part of our ongoing Global Stray Dog Crisis Map Project.

**We speak up for the dogs
the world too often ignores.**



HEALING THE HOMELESS
FEEDING THE HUNGRY
CONNECTING COMMUNITY

Every dog deserves the chance to live.

Change is possible. Compassion is essential. Action is now.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Romania's legal framework places unclaimed or unadopted dogs into a legal euthanasia pathway after the 14-working-day statutory shelter period.

A January 2026 investigation documented serious welfare concerns in nine publicly funded shelters, while reported 2024 data from three locations revealed significant mortality and euthanasia outcomes.

Effective prevention through sterilisation, identification, responsible ownership and enforcement remains central to reducing the number of dogs entering the system.



“ The reality behind the numbers is dogs who suffered, died or were killed in places that were funded and managed in the public interest. ”



CLEAR LEGAL FRAMEWORK

GEO 155/2001, as amended by Law 258/2013, establishes a 14-working-day statutory shelter period after which an individual euthanasia decision can be made for unclaimed or unadopted dogs. Dogs remain legally reclaimable or adoptable until euthanasia is carried out.



INVESTIGATIONS AND DATA

A January 2026 investigation examined nine publicly funded shelters across Romania. Official 2024 data from three municipalities reveal significant mortality and euthanasia outcomes in individual public shelters.



HIGH LEVELS OF LOSS

Reported outcomes in 2024 include approximately 40% mortality in Brăila, 56% were euthanised and another 24% died in Focșani/Golești, and 412 dogs died of “other causes” in Galați.



ADOPTION BARRIERS DOCUMENTED

Investigations documented barriers to adoption in some shelters, including poor information, limited promotion and reluctance to facilitate adoption.



OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Comparable national data are needed to allow meaningful scrutiny. Transparent reporting and strong oversight are essential to protect dogs and ensure public funds are used responsibly.



PREVENTION IS ESSENTIAL

Sterilisation, identification, responsible ownership, abandonment prevention and community support are essential to reducing future shelter intake and the suffering of dogs.

“

The reality behind the numbers is dogs who suffered, died or were killed in places that were funded and managed in the public interest.

”



OUR POSITION

Dog Desk Animal Action believes that healthy, adoptable dogs should not be euthanised simply because they remain unclaimed. We call for effective prevention, humane management and full accountability to protect dogs and reduce reliance on euthanasia.





ROMANIA: WHAT THE LAW SAYS



Law 258/2013 amends Government Emergency Ordinance 155/2001 (GEO 155/2001).

Together, they set out the rules for how dogs without owners must be managed.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK



PURPOSE

Establishes the legal framework for the management of dogs without owners and the operation of the relevant local services and shelters.



SHELTERS AND SERVICES

The legal framework contains provisions governing public shelters, capture, transport, identification and registration, veterinary care, reclaim, adoption and euthanasia.



PUBLIC INFORMATION

Authorities must provide the population with information about shelters, visiting arrangements and opportunities to reclaim or adopt dogs.



14-WORKING-DAY SHELTER PERIOD

Dogs without owners are housed in the relevant shelters for a period of 14 working days, during which they may be reclaimed by their owner or adopted.



OWNER RESPONSIBILITIES AND COSTS

If a dog is reclaimed, the owner must pay the maintenance costs incurred during the shelter period. The amount is established by the local council.

AFTER 14 WORKING DAYS

If a dog remains unclaimed or unadopted after the 14-working-day statutory period, the euthanasia provisions of the law apply.

1

INDIVIDUAL DECISION

An individual euthanasia decision must be issued for each dog.

2

DECISION AND TIMEFRAME

The timeframe for carrying out the decision is established with regard to shelter capacity and available budget.

3

RECORDING AND REPORTING

Euthanasia must be recorded in the shelter's special registers, together with the related information required by law.

Shelters must report monthly the number of registered dogs and their identification numbers to the county veterinary authority, which forwards the data to the central database managed by the national authority.



IMPORTANT

- The expiry of 14 working days does not mean a dog is automatically euthanised on day 15.
- An individual euthanasia decision must first be issued, and that decision establishes the timeframe.
- Until euthanasia is carried out, the dog remains legally available for reclaim by the owner or for adoption.
- For unclaimed or unadopted dogs, euthanasia can take place only after the statutory process has been completed and an individual decision has been issued.



THE LAW SETS MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR SHELTER CARE

The framework contains minimum shelter conditions and sanitary-veterinary requirements governing accommodation, feeding, veterinary care and other aspects of management.





LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN PRACTICE



Romania has detailed rules governing the management of dogs without owners, including capture, sheltering, reclaim, adoption and euthanasia. However, legislation alone does not determine outcomes for dogs in public shelters.



1. DOCUMENTED SHELTER CONCERNS

A January 2026 investigation and subsequent reporting documented serious welfare and resource pressures in a number of publicly funded dog shelters.

These findings highlight the gap that can exist between legal requirements and day-to-day conditions.



2. SHELTER CAPACITY PRESSURES

Overcrowding and resource pressures have been documented in individual public shelters. Investigators documented overcrowded kennels, untreated injuries and inadequate environments in some of the facilities examined.

Capacity challenges vary between locations and over time.



3. ADOPTION BARRIERS

Investigators reported barriers to adoption in some of the public shelters examined, including poor public information and reluctance by some facilities to facilitate adoption.

These barriers can reduce opportunities for dogs to find homes.



4. REPORTED OUTCOMES

Reported 2024 data from three individual locations documents significant mortality and euthanasia outcomes.

Detailed verified examples are presented later in this briefing.



5. TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Comparable, comprehensive national data would allow greater scrutiny of shelter outcomes.

Transparent reporting and public access to information are important components of effective accountability.



6. PREVENTION REMAINS ESSENTIAL

Sterilisation, identification, responsible ownership and abandonment prevention are central components of long-term dog population management.

Investing in prevention helps reduce future intake and the pressures on shelters.



7. PRESSURE ON SHELTERS

Repeated intake of new dogs, combined with limited resources and adoption barriers, places continuing demands on shelter capacity and staff.

This can compound welfare pressures where facilities are already struggling.



IMPORTANT

- The Romanian legal framework sets minimum requirements and procedures.
- Documenting challenges is not about blame; it is about ensuring the law delivers the welfare outcomes that dogs deserve.
- Evidence-based reform, adequate funding and community engagement are key to lasting change.



THE LAW PROVIDES THE FRAMEWORK. IMPLEMENTATION DETERMINES OUTCOMES.

Every dog deserves humane treatment, adequate care and the chance to live in safety and dignity.





THE 14-WORKING-DAY SYSTEM



Romania's legislation sets out a statutory process for managing dogs without owners. The key steps are explained below.



1

SHELTER INTAKE

Dogs without owners entering the system are housed in the relevant shelters.



2

14-WORKING-DAY STATUTORY PERIOD

Dogs are housed for a period of 14 working days, during which reclaim and adoption can take place.



3

RECLAIM & ADOPTION

Owners have exclusive reclaim rights during the first seven working days. From the end of that period until the expiry of the 14 working days, dogs may be reclaimed or adopted.



4

AFTER 14 WORKING DAYS

If a dog remains unclaimed or unadopted after the statutory period, the law provides for euthanasia on the basis of an individual decision issued by a person authorised by the mayor.



5

INDIVIDUAL DECISION & TIMEFRAME

The timeframe for carrying out the euthanasia decision is established with regard to shelter capacity and available budget.



6

THE DOG CAN STILL LEAVE ALIVE

Until euthanasia is actually carried out, the dog remains legally available for reclaim by the owner or for adoption.



14 WORKING DAYS IS NOT AN AUTOMATIC DEATH DEADLINE

The expiry of the statutory period does not mean that a dog is automatically euthanised on day 15. An individual euthanasia decision must first be issued and a timeframe established. Until euthanasia is carried out, reclaim or adoption remains possible.



IMPORTANT

The law provides the framework and sets minimum standards. Outcomes for dogs depend on how the system is implemented by local authorities and the resources available to shelters.





OVERSIGHT, TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY



Effective oversight and transparent reporting are essential to ensure that Romania's legal framework for managing **dogs without owners** delivers the welfare outcomes that dogs deserve. Investigations have documented transparency and welfare concerns in individual publicly funded shelters.



1. INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY

Independent scrutiny can help assess shelter conditions, compliance and welfare outcomes.

External investigation has played an important role in documenting conditions in individual public shelters.



2. DATA & REPORTING

Comparable data on intake, reclaim, adoption, mortality and euthanasia would allow shelter outcomes to be assessed more clearly.

Public access to such information would strengthen transparency.



3. TRANSPARENCY

The January 2026 investigation reported transparency concerns in some of the shelters examined, including limited public information and difficulties obtaining information about shelter operations and outcomes.

Transparent processes build public trust and enable concerns to be identified and addressed.



4. ACCOUNTABILITY

Clear responsibility for decision-making, shelter management and animal welfare is important.

Effective complaint and enforcement processes can help identify and address failures to meet legal obligations.



5. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Animal welfare organisations, veterinary professionals and local communities can contribute experience and expertise to humane dog population management.



6. EVIDENCE-BASED IMPROVEMENT

Reliable evidence about shelter conditions and outcomes can inform future policy, resource decisions and improvements in dog population management.



LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Romania's legal framework establishes requirements governing public shelters and the management of dogs without owners. These include:

- Minimum shelter and sanitary-veterinary conditions.
- Record keeping and identification requirements.
- Procedures for reclaim and adoption.
- The statutory euthanasia process.

An individual euthanasia decision is required under the procedure for unclaimed or unadopted dogs.



WHY IT MATTERS

Transparency makes it possible to examine what happens to dogs after they enter the public shelter system.

Reliable data and scrutiny can identify welfare concerns, assess outcomes and support accountability where legal requirements are not met.





ROMANIA: REPORTED PUBLIC SHELTER OUTCOMES

Investigations and reporting have documented significant mortality and euthanasia outcomes in individual publicly funded shelters.

The figures below relate to three locations and should not be treated as national totals.



BRĂILA
2024

Of
1,035
dogs

approximately
40%
reportedly died
during 2024



at a shelter
described
as no-kill.



**FOCȘANI /
GOLEȘTI**
2024

Of
1,114
dogs

56%
were euthanised

24%
reportedly died



GALAȚI
2024

Of
644
dogs admitted

134

were
adopted

28

were legally
euthanised

412

died of
"other causes"



WHAT THESE FIGURES SHOW

These figures relate to three individual locations and should not be treated as national totals. They nevertheless document substantial mortality and euthanasia in individual publicly funded shelters.



ADOPTION BARRIERS HAVE BEEN DOCUMENTED

Separate investigation of publicly funded shelters reported barriers to adoption in some of the facilities examined, including poor public information and reluctance by some shelters to facilitate adoption.



WHY THIS MATTERS

These outcomes are not just numbers. They represent dogs whose lives ended inside publicly funded shelters and raise serious questions about welfare, prevention, capacity and accountability.





ROMANIA: WELFARE CONCERNS IDENTIFIED IN PUBLIC SHELTERS

Investigations of individual publicly funded shelters have documented serious welfare, transparency and adoption-related concerns.

The findings provide evidence of problems within some facilities, but should not be treated as representative of every public shelter in Romania.



1. WELFARE CONCERNS IN SOME SHELTERS

Investigations documented serious welfare concerns in some facilities examined, including:



Overcrowded kennels



Untreated injuries



Inadequate environments



Poor sanitary conditions



2. TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Investigators reported difficulties obtaining information about the operation and outcomes of some shelters examined.

Public information was also reported to be limited or difficult to access in some cases.



3. ADOPTION BARRIERS

Investigators reported reluctance by some shelters to facilitate adoption, alongside problems with publicly available information such as:



Contact details that were incorrect or difficult to find



Opening information that was incorrect or difficult to find



Calls or enquiries that went unanswered in some cases



4. WHY TRANSPARENCY MATTERS

Public access to reliable information makes it easier to examine shelter conditions and outcomes.

Independent scrutiny can help identify welfare concerns and support accountability where legal requirements are not met.



DOG DESK ANIMAL ACTION'S POSITION

We believe Romania's response should place greater emphasis on:



Prevention and responsible ownership



Effective identification and registration



Sterilisation as a key population management tool



Prevention of abandonment



Humane shelter management



Accessible adoption processes



Transparency and public access to information



Accountability and compliance with the law

The concerns documented in individual shelters are serious, but they should not be used to characterise every public shelter in Romania.





ROMANIA: CONCLUSIONS & PRIORITIES

Romania has an established legal framework governing the management of dogs without owners. It regulates local services, sheltering, capture and transport, reclaim and adoption, identification, sterilisation and euthanasia procedures.

Evidence examined in this briefing nevertheless raises serious welfare and transparency concerns in individual publicly funded shelters.



WHAT THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK PROVIDES

Romania's framework establishes:

- ✓ Specialised local services for dogs without owners
- ✓ Minimum shelter requirements
- ✓ A 14-working-day statutory shelter period
- ✓ Reclaim and adoption procedures
- ✓ Identification requirements and statutory sterilisation provisions
- ✓ A regulated euthanasia procedure for dogs that remain unclaimed or unadopted

The law sets the rules.

Source: Law no. 258/2013 (as amended)



WHAT THE EVIDENCE RAISES

Investigations of individual publicly funded shelters have documented serious concerns, including:

- ✗ Overcrowding
- ✗ Untreated injuries
- ✗ Inadequate environments
- ✗ Poor sanitary conditions
- ✗ Transparency problems
- ✗ Barriers to adoption

These findings should not be treated as representative of every Romanian public shelter.



DOG DESK ANIMAL ACTION'S PRIORITIES

Based on the evidence reviewed in this briefing, we believe greater emphasis should be placed on:



Prevention and
responsible
ownership



Effective
identification
and
registration



Sterilisation
of dogs as a
key component



Prevention
of
abandonment



Humane
shelter
management



Accessible
adoption



Transparent
information
and data



Accountability
for compliance
with legal
requirements



OUR POSITION

Dog Desk Animal Action remains concerned about the outcomes documented in individual Romanian public shelters.

Romania's legal framework contains mechanisms for managing dogs without owners, but legislation must be accompanied by humane implementation, transparency and accountability.

Our focus is on reducing the number of dogs entering shelters, protecting the welfare of those who do, and increasing opportunities for dogs to leave shelters alive.

