



## **Amalthia's two day's workshop in Rhodes February 2026**

### Introduction

On the 5-6<sup>th</sup> of February 2026, a two day's workshop in Rhodes with the title, The future of the traditional animal husbandry of the autochthonous cattle in the Dodecanese islands: projects, challenges and solutions, was organised by Amalthia Network, thanks to the sponsorship and support of SAVE Foundation. Aim of the workshop was to present genetical studies, to exchange experiences, to discuss longstanding issues and of course to find viable solutions for the three endangered cattle populations of the Dodecanese islands: the Agathonisi, Nisyros and Kastellorizo native types.

### Rhode's Workshop

The planning of the workshop went on for several months in order to involve possibly all people that are dealing with the animal husbandry in the Dodecanese islands with particular focus on native cattle breeding. Breeders, representatives and veterinaries from several islands (Patmos, Lipsi, Leros, Kalymnos, Kos, Rhodes and Kastellorizo), Amalthia members, professors and scholars of 2 Universities, regional officials, local associations, participated.

The first day (5<sup>th</sup> of February) we were hosted at the Nestoridio communal museum for Modern Art, to present the speeches from the participants (see program next page).

Two round tables followed, one discussing issues, challenges and solutions about the three cattle breeds, and the other about the small horses of Rhodes, who also are facing many challenges. The discussions that followed were very fruitful, many topics and follow-ups were pointed out, where solutions were suggested to support breeders that are excluded from state subsidies because of their autochthonous animals not being recognised officially; particular emphasis was given to: how to solve the issue with the unrecognised cattle populations, the delayed realisation of planned slaughterhouses in minor islands, high transport costs between the islands, care planning and ownership of the small Rhodian horses, realisation of dairy products from rare breeds and other topics.

On the same evening discussions and ideas between all interested people continued at a local tavern, enjoying conviviality and friendship.



## Program

### **5<sup>th</sup> of February – first day:**

- 09:00-09:15 Welcome and introduction to the conference (K. Papaioannou-Amalthia)
- 09:15-09:30 Prologue to the conference (I. Ikonmidis, Director of South Aegean Veterinary Service)

#### **Presentations:**

- 09:50-10:10 Management of small populations (P. Koutsouli- Agricultural University-Athens)
- 10:10-10:30 Genomic diversity and population structure of the indigenous Greek and Cypriot cattle populations (I. Bizelis- Agricultural University-Athens)
- 10:30-10:50 Actual situation of the three Dodecanese cattle populations: project achievements, challenges, solutions (S. Dellepiane-Amalthia)

-----Coffee break 20 min-----

- 11:10-11:30 Dodecanese cattle DNA data analysis and breeding conservation plan (D. Papachristou- Agricultural University-Athens)
- 11:30-11:50 Spectrum of breeds and populations in the Dodecanese (V. Lekkas- Amalthia)
- 11:50-12:10 Amalthia's Herdbook-StudVault (Z. Papaioannou-Amalthia)
- 12:10-12:30 The Agathonisi cattle and their environment (Y. Kazoglou- University of Thessaly)

-----Lunch break 1 hour-----

- 13:30-13:50 The Rhodian Miniature Horse (Phaethon)
- 13:50-14:10 The Kastellorizo cattle rescue, a success case (P. Marghies-Amalthia)
- 14:10-14:30 The Rhodes Hound (A. Drakiou)

-----Coffee break 20 min-----

- 14:50-15:10 Meat products from brachikeratiki cattle breed (A. Tsaprailis-Amalthia)

- 15:10-17:00 Round Table workshop with questions, discussions and ideas (1)

### **Farm visits**

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February, two farms in Rhodes were visited by the workshop's participants. First stop was at the Phaethon Farm for the miniature horse of Rhodes, who is member of Amalthia network. The board members of the organisation, together with Nikos Kostaras, president of Amalthia, showed us the progress made preserving this unique horse breed (see photos below). Only 13 animals are left, but there has been progress in preserving them, with the total number of horses slowly increasing! The stables have been renovated and some young volunteers were helping out and taking care of the



horses. The second stop was at the Farm of Rhodes, where a petting zoo is hosting one of the only three groups of the Kastellorizo cattle population (see related photos below). This type of cattle was saved from sure starvation in 2024, when all animals except two, were transported from Kastellorizo to Rhodes. Here we saw one herd in very good conditions, with new born calves, totalling 7, while another farm nearby has 6 additional animals. The remaining two animals still in Kastellorizo are alive, but won't be kept for much longer, therefore contacts have been established to transport them also to Rhodes, since every single animal is very important.

## Conclusions

The workshop brought many people from various disciplines and backgrounds together, that are united and committed in saving the three cattle populations of the Dodecanese. As mentioned before, the gathering was very fruitful and follow-up actions have been agreed. The awareness that these unique endangered breeds should not be lost was messaged to all. In other words, a sustainable way for the breeders to maintain and increase these cattle types until they will be officially recognised as autochthonous breeds, will include various actions that were agreed from all:

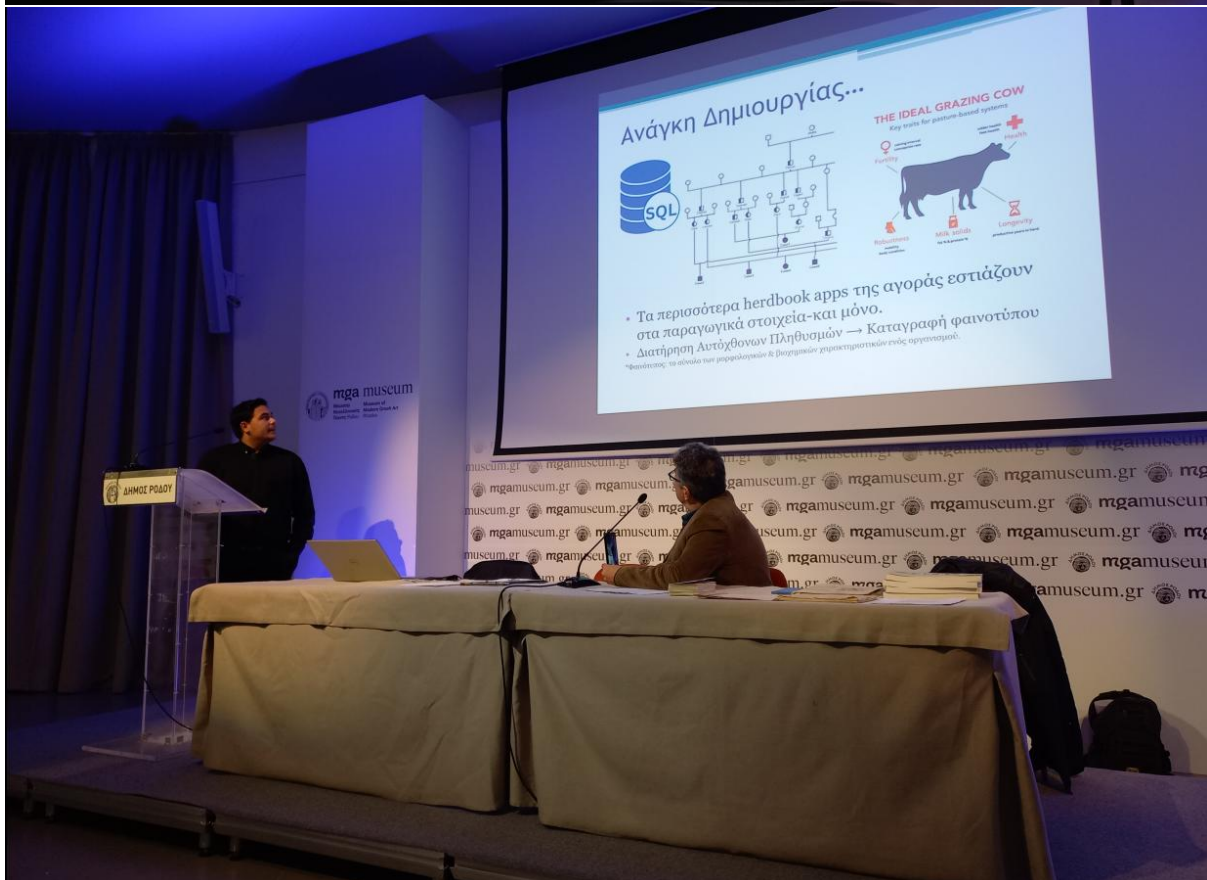
- The promotion of unique dairy and meat products; first project will start in May in Leros with the building of stables and a cheese factory with the Agathonisi type cows
- A similar project is planned in Rhodes with the Kastellorizo cattle
- The support from the Greek tourist association in Rhodes will be sought, since many establishments there are becoming more sensitive and engaged in sustainable agro-biodiversity projects
- The support from the local and regional authorities to promote and protect the traditional animal husbandry activity in the small islands by subsidizing the transport of cattle between islands and pushing for the realisation of the long planned slaughterhouses in Leros and Nisyros
- Breeding activities with possible new breeders for all three endangered cattle will speed up, to increase the number of animals that will be decisive for the recognition as rare breeds
- A third small group of Kastellorizo cattle will be formed in Rhodes or Symi with the two remaining animals left in Kastellorizo, thanks to the SAVE-Amalthia project
- A bull of the Nisyros type will be bought (from SAVE-Amalthia) to give it to a minor breeder with 5-6 good cows of the breed, that does not have an own native bull but only a mixed breed one
- A new Nisyros group will be established in Leros, thanks to a new breeder that took part in the two day's workshop

Various photos of the first day's event below

















Round tables after the presentations





Photos of the second day's event below





