

Editor's pick

Canine free-for-all is already here

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From Cristián Bonacic, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile

You report that there are around a billion dogs in the world, with up to 85 per cent free to interact with the environment to some degree as feral or street dogs.

While your article imagines how dogs might fare in a future without us, a world without responsible human ownership of canines is in effect already here. Biodiversity, human health and the environment are severely affected by free-roaming dogs on all continents.

Humans and domestic animals are infected by rabies and other diseases that dogs can carry. From the predation of endangered birds in New Zealand to the demise of endemic lizards in central Chile, dogs affect many wild species too. The ecological paw print of our dogs has been underestimated.