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## **Playing a role - but which one? : how public service motivation and professionalism affect decision-making in dilemma situations**

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# Chapter 5

## **QUALITATIVE RESULTS: PSM AND PROFESSIONALISM AND THE CONTEXT OF DILEMMA SITUATIONS<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this chapter are based on Schott, C., Kleef van, D.D. and T. Steen (2014). What does it mean and imply to be public service motivated? *The American Review of Public Administration*. DOI: 10.1177/0275074014533589



In this chapter the results of the qualitative analysis are presented. First, to answer secondary research questions 1 and 2, situations are identified in which veterinary inspectors experience dilemmas (5.1) and the decisions they actually make are discussed (5.2). After investigating PSM among veterinary inspectors (5.3) and discussing the question of how and why PSM changes across time (5.3.1), I provide an answer to the question of whether insights from identity theory are indeed useful to clarify the meaning and behavioural consequences of PSM, professionalism, and the interrelatedness of the two concepts (SRQ3, SRQ4, SRQ5). Particular attention is paid to the question of how veterinary inspectors interpret different aspects of their professional role (5.4). Section 5.5 focusses on the questions whether professional role perceptions influence the meaning of PSM, and whether these are reflected in the behaviour of public service motivated individuals. In Section 5.6 considerations influencing decision-making in dilemma situations are described. Each subsection ends with a paragraph summarizing the most important research findings.

All the results discussed are based on data from the large interview panel, except for the results presented in Subsection 5.3.1 – these are based on data from the longitudinal interview panel of newcomers. The translations of interview transcripts from both the interview panels, presented below, are our own; the original Dutch texts of the interview statements used in the study may be obtained from the author on request. The transcripts were selected on the basis of their explanatory power; i.e., if they clearly supported or contradicted my theoretical assumptions and if they brought out new, unexpected information.

## 5.1 Situations in which veterinary inspectors experience dilemmas

In this section I aim to provide an empirical answer to the question *what are the dilemma situations that public service professionals are frequently confronted with?* (SRQ1) and to this end investigate the following proposition: *public service professionals experience dilemmas in situations in which equally important values clash, various stakeholders' demands are in conflict, or the 'public interest' is the guideline of behaviour.*

In the interviews, the majority of veterinary inspectors clearly indicated that they regularly experience dilemmas in their work (n=29). On the basis of the interviews two types of dilemmas could be differentiated: the first related to the nature of the work instructions, the second to conflicts between different values and demands. The proposition that public service professionals experience dilemmas in situations where equally important values clash, various stakeholders' demands are in conflict, and the 'public interest' is the guideline of behaviour (P1) is in accordance with these two types. Both dilemma categories will be discussed in detail.

Veterinary inspectors stated that they encounter dilemmas in their work because the rules they have to enforce do not always appear to be feasible in practice. Frequently cited examples of impracticable rules were loading standards for animal transporters, and the zero-tolerance policy regarding fecal contamination and condensation. Next to this, vague formulations of behavioural guidelines also cause problems. Many interviewees felt that especially animal welfare – an aspect of the public interest – was a grey area. Rules and regulations state that sick animals are not allowed to be transported, because this would cause additional suffering. The problem, however, seems to be that there is no clear definition of when an animal can be considered ‘sick’ and when not.

*There are dubious cases. Is an animal well enough to get on a transporter? This is a grey area. A sick animal is not allowed to get on a transporter. But when is an animal sick? (R18)*

*That's another grey area. The law says: sick animals cannot be slaughtered. Yeah, what is a sick animal? A cow that has a mineral deficit right after giving birth? Is that a sick animal? That's subject to debate. (R35)*

Most dilemmas could be categorized as value/demand-related dilemmas. Most frequently, these included conflicts between the objectives set by the NVWA to safeguard animal welfare/health and public health on the one hand, and economic demands from various stakeholders such as farmers, owners of abattoir, and animal carriers on the other. For example, inspectees often refused to thoroughly disinfect transporters and abattoirs because this is a time-consuming, and therefore costly, activity. However, inadequate cleaning poses a serious threat to public health. Another frequent dilemma concerns the unloading of animals without supervision by a veterinary inspector. Again, economic interests are under pressure here, because meat must be destroyed if the living animal has not been seen and approved by a veterinary inspector. Unsupervised slaughtering, on the other hand, is a risk to animal welfare and puts public health under pressure.

Besides the situations in which the demands set by the organization are in conflict with economic interests, there are also cases of value pluralism: situations in which animal welfare and rules to safeguard public health cannot be realized at the same time. Think, for example, of situations in which weak and suffering animals are the last in line to be slaughtered to ensure that there is no risk for public health. If these animals are slaughtered last, veterinary inspectors have more time to ensure that there is no problem with good meat being contaminated. This procedure is conform the objectives of the NVWA. However, several veterinary inspectors told us they struggled with this (life-preserving) rule, because they saw it as conflicting with animal welfare.

*Well, sometimes an animal is delivered to a slaughterhouse that makes you think: what am I going to do with it. For example, if there is something wrong with the animal it should be slaughtered last. So actually, what you are doing is extending its suffering and anxiety...well, I think that's a very uncomfortable rule, to make the animals suffer any longer. (R31)*

However, there was also a small group of respondents who were not affected by either of the two dilemma categories. It seems that the reason for this lies in the individual personality. In contrast to the other inspectors, they indicated they had a tough character and were not familiar with feelings of doubt. This might indicate that dilemmas are dependent on individual and subjective experiences: there are only dilemmas if veterinary inspectors 'allow' them to be.

*That's not who I am. So that sort of situation will not occur easily. (R1)*

### **Conclusion**

In this section I presented an analysis intended to answer secondary research question 1: *What are the dilemma situations public service professionals are frequently confronted with?* The results indicate that veterinary inspectors frequently encounter dilemma situations in their work. For the most part these are situations in which conflicting demands from different stakeholders, such as the objectives set by the NVWA, cannot be combined with the economic interests of, for example, farmers and owners of abattoirs. Other dilemma situations are situations of value pluralism: public health and animal health are in conflict. Finally, situations in which the work instructions are either not feasible in practice or not clear – as in the case of animal welfare – can also be classified as dilemma situations. Assuming that animal welfare can be used as an aspect of 'the public interest', we can accept the proposition *public service professionals experience dilemmas in situations in which equally important values clash, various stakeholders' demands are in conflict, or the 'public interest' is the guideline of behaviour (P1).*

## **5.2 Decision-making in dilemma situations, and the link with coping strategies**

In this section I try to provide an empirical answer to the question of *what kind of decisions do public service professionals make in dilemma situations?* (SRQ2) Since I am more interested in the reasons underlying public service professionals' decision-making than their actual decisions, I have not formulated any proposition in the theory chapter; rather, the empirical

results have been linked to the typology of decision-making afterwards. The results of the interview analyses indicate that public service professionals make different kind of decisions in perceived dilemma situations: these situations exist 'within the individual'. Two kinds of decisions were predominant: inspectors either prioritized one of the conflicting values or demands that are in conflict, or they deferred the decision. Sometimes I noted that veterinary inspectors came up with new, creative ways of solving a dilemma situation. For example, one veterinary inspector came across a cow with an abscess which was so serious that – according to formal work instructions – the animal should have been rejected right away in order to prevent any risk to public health. He decided to pass the rear end of the animal, while rejecting its midsection. By doing so he limited the financial damage, but also ensured that public health was not put under pressure. Another veterinary inspector indicated that she had ordered a large number of carcasses to be put in cold storage, after a technical defect had been found during the slaughtering process at the end of the day. She decided to do this because she wanted to examine more carefully the next day whether the carcasses could still be used for human consumption. By this decision she showed that she tried to minimize the risk for society while also remaining sensitive to the financial damage caused by the destruction of such a large number of animals. More often, however, I saw that in dilemma situations veterinary inspectors prioritized either economic interests or the objectives set by the organization responsible for animal welfare and public health. For example, one veterinary inspector who clearly put public health first said the following:

*The atmosphere is explosive. They think, and I do understand them... I mean, I had just ordered a horse to be destroyed; a healthy horse, which however had no declaration of used meds. So that was really a good piece of meat put straight into the bin. They find that difficult. (R19)*

Other veterinary inspectors indicated that they made decisions in accordance with inspectees' economic interests. However, it should first be emphasized that they only decided to go with the economic interests if animal welfare and public health were not seriously threatened. For example, if there was 'only' one animal on the transport with a limp, some veterinary inspectors did not impose a fine, although they knew that colleagues would have made a different decision.

In dilemma situations in which a lot of money was involved, such as destroying a large number of animals because they had been slaughtered without supervision or because the documents were not in order, veterinary inspectors said that they deferred the decision. They did not decide on the spot, but rather, talked to their supervisor first, in order to play safe and pass on the responsibility. Other dilemma situations in which some

veterinary inspectors said they would contact the supervisor first were those in which a lot of aggression was involved: the atmosphere was threatening, and there were no other colleagues who offered support. This seemed to be the case especially for relatively new employees – veterinary inspectors with little work experience.

Note that a link can be drawn between these results and the typology of coping strategies. Value conflicts were most frequently solved by the two decoupling coping strategies of ‘biasing’ and ‘building firewalls’. ‘Biasing’, in this context, means that some values – either economic interests or public health/animal welfare – are no longer recognized as important. ‘Building firewalls’ means shifting the conflict to elsewhere in the system. In our case, veterinary inspectors used ‘building firewalls’ by not deciding on the spot what needed to be done, but passing the decision to a supervisor. In some cases, veterinary inspectors made decisions that could be related to the coupling strategy of ‘hybridization’: they figured out new ways of doing their work that made it possible to accommodate both conflicting values at the same time. This means that, in some rare cases, difficult situations present no dilemmas if veterinary inspectors can solve the problem in such a way that multiple values or demands are realized at the same time. Most of the time, however, veterinary inspectors either prioritize one value or demand above another or defer the decision to a higher authority, which implies that many situations are perceived as dilemma situations.

### ***Conclusion***

The results indicate that veterinary inspectors make different decisions in dilemma situations. Most of the time they decouple conflicting values by using one of the two coping strategies of ‘biasing’ and ‘building firewalls’. Sometimes, they also cope via ‘hybridization’. This raises the question of why individuals actually make different decisions. What drives their decision-making in dilemma situations, and can the concepts of PSM and professionalism be used to teach us more about this question? Before I return to this question, I will first present the empirical confirmation of the fuzziness of PSM. And then investigate if combining PSM and professionalism with insights from identity theory is indeed useful to clarify the meaning and consequences of the two concepts.

## **5.3 Public service motivation among veterinary inspectors**

This section focuses on PSM among veterinary inspectors in order to determine whether the critique that PSM is a fuzzy concept is justified. In Subsection 5.3.1 the question of how and why PSM develops over time is addressed, with particular attention for the potential effect of the ‘reality shock’ on a drop in PSM.

A small group of veterinary inspectors directly referred to PSM when asked: “What motivates you in your work?” or “What do you like about your work?” These inspectors stated that their motivation was the desire to be able to contribute to the public interest.

*It is not always easy or fun working at abattoirs. But you are contributing to the public interest! (R29)*

Many others – about half of the panel – were more detailed and mentioned various aspects or dimensions of PSM as motivational factors in their work, such as public health, animal health, and animal welfare. It is noticeable that these three aspects are frequently mentioned together rather than separately.

*Actually, what motivates me most is what the NVWA stands for: public health, animal health and animal welfare. That's what I stand for, too. That's what motivates me. (R18)*

*What is motivating are the core responsibilities. I am able to do my own thing. As a veterinary you have a say in what happens! (R7)*

Other inspectors were very clear that what motivated them was related to being able to eliminate abuse and deception in the meat-packing industry, break through bad habits and change processes and the behaviour of inspectees for the better.

*Sometimes, I'm visiting a place where nobody smiles so to speak, there's a lot of irritation and annoyance, which often leads to a negative downwards spiral. I make a point of breaking through that atmosphere and then you see that things can in fact be done differently. That things are going in the right direction. I like that very much and it's a challenge in the work I'm doing here for the NVWA. (R1)*

Besides the willingness to contribute to the public interest, safeguard certain public values, and to eliminate abuse some veterinary inspectors also indicate that being able to support others who are more vulnerable is part of their daily motivation at work. They highlight that it is important to ensure that children and the elderly are provided with healthy food, for example, because these groups are highly sensitive to the consequences of salmonella infection.

Another motivational factor besides PSM that could frequently be derived from the interviews is the interaction with different stakeholders such as colleagues, the individuals that are inspected, and animals. Next to this, changing tasks and locations (e.g., visiting different abattoirs or farms) and public sector motivation (e.g., regular working hours, regular periods of vacation and a stable salary) are also mentioned as motivational factors.

*Working together with people is one of the positive things. A different location, different people each day. (R19)*

*It's the diversity. No day is like another. (R36)*

*I don't want to go back [to my own practice]. Been there, done that. Also because I like it here a lot. You quietly slip into the working hours. They are very pleasant. You start early and you finish early...[...]It's very nice. And what I consider the fringe benefits – they are simply great. This makes the work a pleasure, as well. (R18)*

## **Conclusion**

Even though the inspectors described their motivation in different ways, I found that in general the level of PSM and general job satisfaction among veterinary inspectors was high. Some respondents referred to PSM directly by mentioning that their motivation was the desire to contribute to the public interest, others referred to the separate dimensions of PSM by indicating that what motivated them in their work was the possibility to safeguard public values, right any wrongs, and support people in need. The only subcode in the concept of PSM that could not be derived from the interviews was 'making sacrifices', which relates to the PSM dimension of 'self-sacrifice'.

However, the interview statements not only show that veterinary inspectors working at the NVWA seem to be public service motivated, but also indicate that simply asking veterinary inspectors about their motivation for their work is not enough to get a clear idea of the meaning of PSM. The respondents either refer to the abstract concept of 'public interest', or mention different aspects of it (public health, animal health and animal welfare). However, these different aspects cannot always be realized at the same time due to their conflicting characteristics (for more information on this see previous section). This finding can be interpreted as supporting my criticism on traditional PSM research: that PSM as viewed in traditional research is a fuzzy concept. As will be shown in Section 5.5, a better picture of what it means to be public service motivated can be gained by asking individuals how they perceive their role of veterinary inspector, and what interests they represent in this role. Before I combine PSM with professional role identity, however, I will first discuss how and why PSM changes over time (5.3.1) and the concept of professional role identity itself (5.4).

### 5.3.1 The development of PSM over time

The topic of this section is the empirical investigation of the question of how and why the strength of PSM develops across time, using longitudinal interview data of newcomers working at the NVWA. I will start by comparing the presence of PSM in the first and second rounds of the interviews, and then focus on the mechanisms explaining possible changes in the level of PSM. I investigated particularly whether a decrease in PSM could be explained by a mismatch between organizational and job expectations and the experienced working reality.

#### *How does public service motivation develop over time?*

The results indicated that PSM plays an important role among newcomers at the NVWA. In the first interview round almost all respondents (12 out of 15) mentioned that what motivates them in their work is the opportunity to safeguard animal welfare and/or public health, or to improve things. Animal welfare and public health were sometimes mentioned in combination, but animal welfare was most frequently mentioned on its own (six times). Other aspects of PSM – such as the opportunity to eliminate abuse, to stand up for vulnerable people, and ideas related to ‘self-sacrifice’ – were not mentioned.

*I like my work and it motivates me if things actually get better...if I do this they comply... you're making things better together with the people from the abattoir... they listen to you... they value what you say and they try to cooperate. (R14)*

*Listen, I'm all about animal welfare. You can make a difference. It should happen gently and slowly. ...[]... I find this very important... not overloading trucks... It has to be done, everybody knows it, but it needs to be done properly. That's one of my responsibilities, and I think the best one. (R13)*

Next to PSM, public sector motivation – which refers to being motivated to work in the public sector because of assets such as regular working hours, income and holiday periods –, task variety, and the interactions with different stakeholders were mentioned by inspectors. Practical reasons such as physical complaints and troubles with former employees were also often mentioned as factors of work motivation. Beyond that, in the first round of interviews newcomers also stressed that the opportunity to develop their competencies had a motivating effect. This is not surprising, because all interviewees were in the middle of an extensive training programme. In the second round, having more responsibilities was often mentioned as being motivating. This is not surprising either; all respondents who stressed a higher level of responsibilities as a motivational factor had received a promotion

just before the second round of interviews took place. This raises questions concerning causality. Are individuals motivated first of all by the opportunity to develop and be given responsibilities, and is that why a) they decided to apply for a job in which they are obliged to follow an entire training programme and b) they received a promotion? Or is it the other way around? Are they motivated because they have the opportunity to develop and because they have more responsibilities in the new function? At first sight the results indicated that the latter explanation fits better. An increased level of responsibility was mentioned as a motivational factor only in the second round of interviews, and the opportunity to develop was mentioned more frequently in the first round than in the second. However, if we take a closer look it becomes clear that the motivations build upon each other, and that only individuals who personally asked for the promotion are motivated by the higher level of the work. After a year of working at the NVWA, some interviewees indicated that they started to have the daily working practice well in hand. This means that they did not feel any need for additional training in order to master their daily tasks and feel competent; rather, they started to look for new challenges in their work such as holding increased responsibility.

*At this moment I have more responsibilities. I really do feel that I have more responsibilities and that it's me who has to hold things together and get everybody on the same page. I experience this as a challenge. (R14)*

*In the meantime I have become a veterinary inspector with managerial responsibilities. That makes working interesting again. If this was not the case I would think: well is that really it? (R5)*

Comparing the statements about PSM in the first round of interviews with those in the second round, we note that the importance of PSM as a motivator generally seems to decrease. In other words, in the second round, five interviewees who initially indicated they were public service motivated seemed to have lost their PSM when they were interviewed for the second time: they did not mention any motivation that could be associated with PSM. Therefore, in this study I speak of a 'loss' of PSM while aware of the fact that the level of PSM might also merely decrease. However, the qualitative method applied here makes it impossible to detect minor changes in the level of PSM. Next to this, the data showed that of those who were not public service motivated when joining the NVWA, there was nobody who indicated 15 months later that they were motivated by the opportunity to contribute to the public interest or safeguard certain values such as animal welfare and public health. Together, these two findings go against both the hypothesis that PSM is unchangeable and the socialization hypothesis. PSM did change, but it did not increase if individuals spent

more time within the organization. This raises the question of why PSM vanishes across time among some individuals, but not among others. In the next section I focus on the five individuals who had lost their PSM, compare them with individuals who remained public service motivated across time, and analyse whether the loss in PSM can be explained by a mismatch between the interviewees' job expectations and the working reality.

### ***Why is PSM lost over time? Pre-entry expectations***

For the empirical assessment of the reality shock as a potential explanation for a drop in PSM, I analysed veterinary inspectors' expectations of their work and the organization prior to their actual working experiences at the NVWA. It is noticeable that, when first interviewed, individuals who remained public service motivated over time expressed much clearer expectations with regard to their future work and employer than people who were later found to have lost their PSM. They expected that working as a veterinary inspector implied knowing all different kinds of rules and regulations, and enforcing them in order to safeguard animal welfare and public health. At the same time, they realized that they were likely to encounter resistance: that the people they had to inspect might work against them, or at least try to stretch the rules, and that in much of the work they would be on their own.

*I find it very difficult to describe what I expect from the work. On the one hand you hope that you don't encounter difficult situations. What you want most is that the operator of the abattoir follows the rules nicely. But people also want to make money and that's why they try to stretch the rules in order to sell a little more [...] On the one hand I find such situations challenging. On the other hand I am also a little afraid whether I will be able to handle this. I hope I will have sufficient background in law and legislation, by trainings etcetera. (R10)*

*Actual surveillance at slaughterhouses. Not only ensuring that everybody follows the rules and animal welfare is not put at risk, but I also expect it to be some kind of mentoring of the organization. Not mentoring at the level of management, but focused on animal health, public health and animal welfare. (R6)*

*What do I expect? Running ahead of things, I think it is a disadvantage that you work on your own. [...] At a slaughterhouse you work alone. And you have to get up very early. (R11)*

In contrast, all five veterinary inspectors who 'lost' their PSM (as compared to the seven respondents who stayed public service motivated) seemed to have had no clear expectations of the work of veterinary inspectors. One individual indicated that she phoned

two inspectors she knew, in order to gain a better picture. Another explained that he had watched an introduction video. A third mentioned that she had some expectations because of her father, who also works at the NVWA. Nevertheless, none of them came up with concrete expectations concerning the content of the work.

*Not that much actually. I did not have any expectations. You can watch an introduction video on internet, where you see a little of what they [veterinary inspectors] do. But what they really do on a daily basis? I had no clue. This made the job application difficult too, because I had no clear idea. (R3)*

*What my expectations were? I had none, I was just going to wait and see. (R2)*

*Yes, that's difficult. Of course I knew my father's stories, but that's not the same as doing it yourself. I got a little bit the idea that you go and check that everybody does their work properly. But concerning the actual process I really had no clue. (R4)*

At the start of their employment with the NVWA the group of interviewees who remained public service motivated over a period of 15 months had a much clearer picture of what working as a veterinary inspector implied in practice than the group of employees who 'lost' their PSM. They were better informed not only about the actual content of the work, but also about potential difficulties such as aggression and the loneliness on the work floor. Therefore, reality shock as traditionally defined (i.e., the discrepancy between how individuals think of their future work and how they experience the working reality) seems not wholly adequate to explain the loss of PSM. Because individuals who lost their PSM did not have any clear expectations regarding their work, there could be no discrepancy between these expectations and the working reality. Rather, it might be argued that they experienced a slightly different sort of shock; perhaps not because of the traditionally expected discrepancy between work expectations and working reality, but rather because of the mismatch between their ability to cope with difficult work demands and the working reality. In other words, could it be that because they were less aware of the potential difficulties of the job beforehand, they lacked the ability to deal with troubles? And does this consequently mean that this group of veterinary inspectors experienced the 'dark side' of their work as more stressful, which leads to a loss of PSM? This question is addressed in the next part of the analysis.

### ***Why is PSM lost over time? Working reality***

The fact that the NVWA is a large and unwieldy organization was noted and criticized by almost all newcomers in the second round of interviews. However, it seemed that this did not come as a surprise to any of the interviewees. Individuals actually indicated that this is what they had expected; however, they also said that it was frustrating that every time they wanted to take up a task – every time they wanted to be assertive – this could not be realized right away. Often it was not clear to them who needed to be involved or contacted in order to get things done.

*What I don't like? The organization. Our head of team is a great guy... [...]but if you go further up in the hierarchy and you want to get things done at that level, you find it's really a spineless public organization. It takes hours to achieve something – typical of government, I think. If you need something, you first have to fill in three applications and three people have to look at it. If you're lucky, you'll get it, but it is also possible that you have to wait for another three months. (R2)*

*Well, I realize that the NVWA is a large organization. Sometimes this makes it hard to find the right people if you have a question... [...] Sometimes it takes quite a while before you get an answer. That's why everything works slowly and that's a pity. (R6)*

Another frequently cited source of frustration is the lack of uniform rule enforcement. Both groups of interviewees – those losing and keeping their PSM – indicated that they had a hard time dealing with inconsistent rule enforcement. In particular, they were not happy with their impression that some colleagues do not want to enforce the law in order to spare themselves trouble with the inspectee. They emphasized that it is very important that everybody moves in the same direction, because otherwise the inspectors' authority is put under pressure and future rule enforcement becomes more difficult.

*What I find disappointing is that everybody has their own opinion and their own way of doing things and it is very difficult to bring people into line a bit [...] For example, you say: 'I have warned so-and-so a couple of times, shall we be a bit more strict next time?' Then somebody else says: 'No, I don't want that! It would only make them turn against us and that's going to be difficult'. [...] You cannot expect everybody to do exactly the same, but uniformity is needed! (R3)*

A third source of disappointment was the attitude and behaviour of the individuals inspected. In particular, the disappointment came from the impression that many of the inspectees could not be trusted because they would try to manipulate and stretch rules, and the working atmosphere was often tense. An interesting finding was that not all newcomers

experienced this negative working reality as frustrating and stressful to the same extent. Individuals who had clear expectations of what the job of veterinary inspector implies – i.e., that resistance might be part of it – seemed to experience resistant behaviour as less stressful and frustrating than individuals who had no prior working expectations. This group of employees seemed to have found ways to deal with resistance, such as paying more attention to covering themselves or accepting resistant behaviour as a negative, but unavoidable, part of their job.

*Well, sometimes things happen that should not happen and that means that you have to impose fines . That is not always fun to do, but it happens. But OK, that is what you expect and you just know that it's part of the job. (R9)*

*There's one slaughterhouse where they're always glad to see the back of us, and I was not looking forward to going there. Well, it is not always easy that's for sure. But you just cover yourself even better. Three times better than at other places. (R15)*

Interviewees who started to work rather 'unsuspecting', on the other hand, clearly indicated that they felt very uncomfortable about inspectees' attitudes and behaviour and the reactions to their work. They clearly said that this was against their expectations and that they felt upset and had trouble getting used to this aspect.

*I'd heard earlier: 'you cannot trust them' [inspectees] [...] when it comes to the crunch they talk back to you. However, if you don't have anything on paper, you cannot achieve anything. For me, this was a learning moment, or rather it was really a surprise. I hoped that they would be honest all the time. But no! If their own interests are at stake, they start lying [...] At that moment, I was upset, very upset! (R1)*

*And what also disappointed me is that I just have to get used to working in the commercial sector. That people manipulate you and are dishonest. I have to get used to this. I tend to believe everybody, but they are just lying right in your face. (R4)*

## **Conclusion**

The stressful and difficult working reality of veterinary inspectors is reflected in the large and unwieldy organization of the NVWA, the lack of uniform rule enforcement, colleagues' resistant attitudes, and behaviours of inspectees. The bureaucratic characteristics of the NVWA do not surprise any of the newcomers, and the lack of uniform rule enforcement is acknowledged by both individuals who maintain and individuals who lose their PSM over the first months of working at the NVWA. Clear differences were found in the way interviewees experience resistant behaviour. On the one hand, individuals with clear prior

work expectations seem to be able to deal with it, but individuals who start their work as veterinary inspector rather naively seem to have much more trouble dealing with lies and manipulation. They indicate that they are disappointed and upset. I argue that this might explain why this group of individuals lose their PSM and why they are no longer willing to contribute to society.

## **5.4 Interpretations of different aspects of the professional role of veterinary inspectors**

In this section I aim to take a first step towards answering the question of *how can the meaning and behavioural consequences of professionalism be clarified in dilemma situations* (SRQ4)? In the theory chapter I argued that professionalism had better be approached as professional role identity than as an abstract ideal. In order to verify this argument I will first discuss the questions whether veterinary inspectors' interpretations of central aspects of their work vary, and whether there are differences between 'regular' veterinary inspectors and practitioners concerning the ways they interpret the central aspects of their work. Asking individuals how they perceived their role of veterinary inspector, and what interest they represented in this role, enabled us to distinguish different interpretations of the role of 'veterinary inspector'. The interpretations vary concerning four central aspects of the work of a veterinary inspector: *communication and social skills, knowledge base, strict rule enforcement, and safeguarding organizational values*. In this section I will focus on the different interpretations respondents bring to these four aspects and discuss them in detail (see Figure 4 below).

### ***Communication and social skills***

The majority of respondents saw communication and social skills as important competences in the work of a veterinary inspector. For most of them, communication and social skills mattered because they are regarded as necessary for law enforcing. Being able to explain to different stakeholders the purpose and inescapability of rules and regulations was seen as an instrument to reach rule compliance. However, there were also inspectors who stressed the importance of communication with colleagues, because they saw it as a way to improve uniform enforcement of rules. Other inspectors did not mention a specific object of communication. Rather, they emphasized the importance of being able to deal with people in a socially appropriate way in general.

*Yes, that's actually true for everybody. You have to have communication skills. You have to be able to consult with others [inspectees]. You have to be able to explain what you base your decisions on. (R24)*

*The decision doesn't change, but what you can do is deliver the message in a certain way. I think that is one of the most important skills that you need [as a veterinary inspector]. (R31)*

### **Knowledge base**

About half of the large interview panel mentioned that know-how is an important aspect of their role as veterinary inspector. Some inspectors remained vague about what exactly they mean by having know-how; others were more explicit. They clearly indicated what they based their decisions on. Most of them referred to knowledge of inspection tools such as legislation, rules, regulations, and instructions. However, there were also some veterinary inspectors who emphasized veterinary medicine as a knowledge base, or referred to a combination of veterinary medicine and knowledge of inspection tools.

*[A good veterinary inspector is] somebody who knows rules and regulations inside out, who knows what is illegal and what is allowed. (R9)*

*Knowledge of veterinary medicine is very important. (R16)*

*First of all – and this is typical of veterinarians – you need to have the medical expertise [...], knowledge of the basic rules and regulations is inherent in the inspection work we are doing. (R10)*

### **Strict rule enforcement**

Enforcing rules and regulations is one of the core tasks of all types of inspectors. The data showed a wide divergence in veterinary inspectors' attitudes and the levels of importance they attach to strict rule enforcement. Some inspectors had a positive attitude towards enforcement and indeed saw it as their key task. Others said that enforcement is an aspect of their work they liked less, and that generating voluntary compliance was a much better way to get things done. Two primary reasons for a positive attitude towards strict rule enforcement could be distilled from the data. First, inspectors supported enforcement if they perceived rules as legitimate and useful. Strict enforcement was seen as the only way to safeguard the organizational objectives of public health, animal health, and animal welfare, and to eliminate wrongs systematically.

*In the past, I've seen lots of things. Lenient supervision, bad supervision bring so much misery and trouble. That's not what you want. You'd better not even think about it. (R23)*

Second, veterinary inspectors also had a positive attitude towards strict rule enforcement if they saw enforcement as an inherent aspect of their work. They emphasized that strict rule enforcement is a way to guarantee uniformity and transparency towards all stakeholders, and that this was one of the primary reasons why they had been hired in the first place. Interestingly, they did not necessarily support strict rule enforcement personally, but because they accepted law enforcement as part of the job, they considered it an important aspect of their work no matter what.

*The people at the [inspected] plant just will not give you the time of day for a couple of weeks. They are angry at you. But that's what we've been hired for, and this takes us back to the willingness to enforce and the question in how far we are actually able to enforce. (R18)*

*I think you have to be aware of your position very clearly. You have been hired by the government to supervise, and these supervisory tasks are set out in and tested against legislation. And that's something, I mean that's what you have to focus on. (R24)*

*Yes, you just have to follow the law. I cannot come up with my own rules because that is not clear for the inspectees. I try to stick to the law as closely as possible. That's how it works. I did not write the legislation. But I do try to enforce it. It does not matter whether I support it or not. (R35)*

I also found two reasons for a negative attitude towards strict rule enforcement. First, there was a group of veterinary inspectors who believed that there are better ways to safeguard the organizational objectives of public health, animal health, and animal welfare than strict rule enforcement. They were convinced that social skills are a better tool to reach this goal, because in this way they could create understanding for the necessity of rule compliance. They highlighted the importance of empathy and dialogue in their job.

*You can also try friendliness to persuade individuals to perform the actions necessary, and make them actually want to do that. If you manage that I think you have achieved a lot. (R9)*

*You can, so to speak, reach a goal in many different ways and I always try to use a bit of humour, and give an example, for instance 'if you give up two things you can get back three'. That's how it works. But if you just stand there and bluntly announce 'this is the law and this is how it's got to be done' you won't get anywhere. (R17)*

Other veterinary inspectors opposed strict rule enforcement for personal reasons. These inspectors did not feel comfortable enforcing regulations in an authoritarian manner, because this did not fit their self-perception (the awareness of the characteristics that constitute one's self). They were sensitive how others saw them and wanted to be liked.

*Only, enforcement is not my thing and it won't ever be. I'm someone who wants to please people and by definition you don't please anyone here. Everyone dislikes you, and that is sometimes difficult. (R19)*

### **Safeguarding values**

There were variations in the hierarchy of values as to which values veterinary inspectors considered more and less important to be safeguarded in their work. Some explicitly put public health at the top of their list, others prioritized animal welfare over public health. Finally, there was also a group of veterinary inspectors who did not mention public health but only stressed animal welfare (and animal health) as a value that should be fostered. Interestingly, the reverse situation was not the case. No veterinary inspectors mentioned only public health as a crucial interest to be safeguarded.

*Yes, well, it's animals! Animals are the only living creatures that cannot stand up for themselves. That's what I work for. (R25)*

*A veterinarian also needs to serve the interests of human beings. That's why I think public health is important. I'm also for animal welfare... yes, but public health comes first for me. (R20)*

*There is a fundamental difference between human beings and animals. For me that is very clear. So, public health comes first! (R15)*

*I consider public health very important, just like animal welfare. This is a real challenge! That's the way I see it. (R38)*

Even though it was not immediately mentioned when we asked the inspectors what values they represent as professionals, it seemed that next to the public interest, animal welfare and animal health they also saw safeguarding economic interests as part of their professional role. Several interviewees clearly indicated that the economic interests of stakeholders should also be taken into account, because these stakeholders are key figures in the Dutch economy. They pointed out that rigidly sticking to all rules would mean the end for a large number of small businesses, and overregulation of the sector.

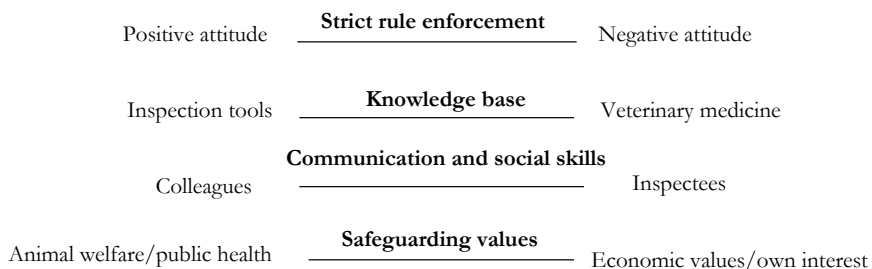
*To a certain extent you also have to think along with the business you are inspecting. Making a profit is necessary, or they'll go broke. (R22)*

*In my view we are also a service-oriented organization. We are not only environmental inspectors so to speak, but we also promote The Netherlands Ltd. (R8)*

The reason why economic interests was mentioned only implicitly as an answer to the question “What values do you represent in your work?” is probably related to the phenomenon of social desirability. The NVWA strongly emphasizes that inspectors need to be immune to the (economic) interests of the inspectees – they work autonomously and transparently. There was also a group of inspectors who clearly distanced themselves from inspectees and emphasized that economic interests was the very last thing on their minds.

*Me, I never consider whether something harms the operators. They are human beings. They can stand up for themselves. But animals, they cannot make decisions. (R13)*

**Figure 4** Schematic overview of the different aspects of the role of veterinary inspectors



### ***Differences between practitioners and ‘regular’ veterinary inspectors***

As pointed out in Chapter 3, next to ‘regular’ veterinary inspectors the NVWA also employs so-called *practitioners*, many of whom also have their own practice as independent veterinarians. These practitioners indirectly depend on the well-being of the private sector, since it is entrepreneurs who provide their income. Moreover, their distance to the NVWA is larger. They work fewer hours for the NVWA than ‘regular’ veterinary inspectors – 13 as compared to 24 per week – and, beyond that, they do not always participate in team meetings. Some practitioners indicated that they were not invited or not willing to attend meetings. If team meetings were scheduled on a day, or part of a day, that they did not work for the NVWA, some of them did not go to the meeting because it would cost them their day off or they had other responsibilities. Another reason for not attending the meetings is

that the work in the abattoirs continues, also during meetings. Because an unbroken chain of supervision is needed, it is the practitioners who have to take over at the abattoirs.

*Often we do not go to the team meeting. For example, if the meeting is scheduled at five o'clock, and if you finish working around one in Putte and you have to be in Zwolle at five o'clock – that is not working. This means you lose a whole day. We just don't do this. (R11)*

*Team meetings are scheduled regularly. But we are not invited. (R9)*

On the basis of the practitioners' distance to the NVWA, it might be argued that practitioners internalize organizational values and objectives to a lesser degree than 'regular' veterinary inspectors do. Because of this and their involvedness with the private sector it would be interesting to investigate whether there are differences in the way practitioners and 'regular' veterinary inspectors interpret certain aspects of their role. The interview analyses suggest that there are some differences between these two groups regarding the ways they perceive their professional role. However, these differences are rather small, and because the group of practitioners is small (n=9) the results need to be interpreted with caution.

All veterinary inspectors who clearly expressed a positive attitude towards strict rule enforcement – i.e., who consider it an inherent and necessary aspect of their work – were 'regular' inspectors. In contrast, none of the nine practitioners had a positive attitude towards strict rule enforcement; nobody ever mentioned it as a crucial aspect of their work. This finding supports my assumption that practitioners internalize organizational values and objectives to a lesser degree than do 'regular' veterinary inspectors. However, the differences between these two groups of employees are not that clear-cut. I found both 'regular' veterinary inspectors and practitioners advocating convincing rather than forcing inspectees to follow the rules as an important aspect of their work. Next to this, I saw individuals from both groups who indicated that considering economic interests was part of their work. One explanation for this finding might be that these 'regular' veterinary inspectors – those who considered the economic interests – had worked in private practices for many years before they were employed by the NVWA as civil servants. Therefore, they still might think as private practitioners. They might not yet (?) have entirely internalized strict rule enforcement, and economic interests might still be part of their perception.

## **Conclusion**

This first analysis was intended to partly answer secondary research question 4: *How can the meaning and behavioural consequences of professionalism be clarified in dilemma situation (SRQ4)?* In the theory chapter I suggested that professionalism had better be approached as professional role identity, and put forward the proposition that *individuals holding the same profession differ regarding the way they interpret their professional role: they have different professional role identities (P4)*. The results seem to support this proposition. They show that veterinary inspectors indeed have different interpretations of four central aspects of their work – communication and social skills, knowledge base, strict rule enforcement, and safeguarding organizational values –, which supports my argument that approaching professionalism as one overarching concept is inadequate, and that it can better be approached as professional role identity. This raises the question of how the interpretations of these work aspects are related. Would it be possible to identify different types, or conceptualizations, of the role of veterinary inspector? What is more, do the different interpretations have behavioural consequences (second part of SRQ4)? These questions – and the question of how PSM and professionalism are related to one another (SRQ5) – are addressed in the next section.

## **5.5 Different professional role identities and the link with PSM: clarifying the meaning and behavioural consequences of these concepts**

In this section I take a second step towards answering the question *how can the meaning and behavioural consequences of professionalism be clarified in dilemma situations (SRQ4)* by investigating the proposition *individuals holding the same profession differ regarding the way they interpret their professional role: they have different professional role identities (P4)*. Also, I aim to find a first empirical answer to the question *how can the meaning and behavioural consequences of PSM be clarified in dilemma situations (SRQ3)?* In the theory chapter I argued that the meaning and behavioural consequences of PSM can be clarified by approaching the concept as a role-dependent rather than an abstract concept. In order to verify this line of reasoning the following two propositions must be investigated: 1) *the meaning of public service motivation, and its behavioural implications, depend on the interpretations individuals bring to the different roles they occupy in society (P2)* and 2) *professional role identity provides meaning to being public service motivated and is reflected in decision-making in dilemma situations (P5)*. Finally, the analysis should provide us with insights into the relationship between PSM and professionalism (SRQ5).

As found in the previous section, respondents emphasized different aspects of the public interest, depending on the way they interpret certain aspects of their role of professional. Some, for example, strongly focused on public health whereas others paid more attention to animal welfare or even considered economic interests. Put differently, depending on how veterinary inspectors interpret their professional role, the meaning of the concept of public interest – and hence also the meaning of PSM – varies. The concept of professional role identity, therefore, seems to be useful if we want to clarify the meaning of PSM. By asking individuals how they perceived their role of veterinary inspector and what interests they represented in that role, we acquired a better picture of what it means and what it implies to be public service motivated. In the following, I will focus on two public service motivated respondents – I will call them *John* and *Anna* –, show that they have different professional role identities, and investigate whether the choices they make in their work as inspectors differ as well. I decided to focus on these two individuals because they present two cases with very clear and opposing professional role identities. Next to this, focusing on such a small number of cases makes it possible to study them in-depth and to trace back exactly how their professional role identity is reflected in the decisions they make in dilemma situations. However, we also need to be aware of the fact that there are individuals with less clear professional role identities, and hence less clear – or even multiple – interpretations of the public interest. I will describe this group of individuals, too.

In his work, John advocates animal welfare. He holds a service-oriented attitude towards the people he is inspecting, being responsive to their needs. In addition to animal welfare, he also considers economic well-being an important aspect of public interest. He is not the strict enforcer of rules and regulations the NVWA wants him to be. On the contrary, he is rather lax regarding enforcement and more sensitive regarding economic interests. This should not surprise us, as animal welfare is an important reason for young people to start studying veterinary medicine (De Graaf, 2003), and next to being taught natural science and clinical matters, students of veterinary medicine also have courses on the economic aspects of farming. Thus, John can be categorized as having a *veterinary medicine-focused professional role identity*. He focusses on animal welfare and is concerned about the economic interests of the person inspected.

*For me, animal welfare is very important. Actually that is for me the most important thing. At least, that is my opinion. That's what I work for. (John, R5)*

*Some abattoirs can hardly survive. Twenty pigs less and there is a financial loss that day. If you do enforce all rules the business gets sucked down the drain. That leads to*

*bankruptcy and you cannot always let things get that far. And then they tell you in a training: "That's the abattoir's problem, you're here to enforce the law". It is sometimes difficult to do. (John, R5)*

This identity is activated frequently. When encountering a dilemma situation, for example pigs being treated badly, John ensures animal welfare without sticking rigidly to rule enforcement, sparing the inspected trouble. This makes John's behaviour in line with his perception of the professional role as emphasising animal welfare while at the same time remaining sensitive to the needs of the individuals being inspected.

*I talked to the people, also included the boss... that will do for a while [...] I don't need to report everything.... every anomaly... I don't have to make everything official! (John, R5)*

Now consider the case of Anna, who is also a veterinary inspector working for the NVWA and holds exactly the same position. To the same question (how do you perceive your role of a 'good' veterinary inspector?), she gives a very different answer. Her primary concern is enforcing rules and regulations to guarantee integrity, consistency and public health. This emphasis fits in well with the mission of the organization. Willingness to be strict in rule enforcement has become an important selection criterion for new employees (NVWA, 2012). Anna can be categorized as having an *organization-focused professional role identity*.

*(The) Willingness to enforce has to be there. To be principled is I think very important. To be consistent... not doing something different if you are wearing a different hat. (Anna, R16)*

Like John's, in dilemma situations Anna's behaviour is in accordance with her perception of the professional role. Rule enforcement in order to guarantee consistency is the guiding principle of her behaviour, whereas other interests such as public health and animal welfare are less important and concern for the inspectee does not come in to it at all.

*At such a moment, I'm very willing to enforce the rules. That's how it is written in the legislation. That's how it has to be done...[...]... if you think about it... regarding public health...it might not even be very dangerous. But it's stated very clearly in the legislation... [...]... I stick to the law, even if I know that the risk for public health is limited. (Anna, R16)*

*An animal must be seen by a veterinarian. Otherwise I have to reject the animal. Very strict rule enforcement. After that you have to consider public health and ask yourself: Do you see any risk for public health? (Anna, R16)*

There were also many respondents who were less clear as to which category of professional role identity they belonged: veterinary inspectors who are neither strict enforcers nor customer-oriented public servants. I call them veterinary inspectors with a *mixed or hybrid professional role identity*. This can best be illustrated by looking into work-related dilemmas: how the inspectors solve them and what they base their decisions on. I will now describe this group of veterinary inspectors.

The behaviour of the respondents from this group is not consistently guided by a specific interpretation of the professional role across time and space. They do not rely on rule enforcement as a guiding principle of behaviour at all times and in all situations, but neither are they especially sensitive and perceptive to the needs of inspectees and eager to safeguard animal welfare. Rather, the question of which type of veterinary inspector they belong to – veterinary inspectors with an organization-focused professional role identity or veterinary inspectors with a veterinary medicine-focused professional role identity – seems to be influenced by external circumstances. For example, the respondents mention that if a wrong occurs for the first time without previous warning having been given, and inspectees have plausible explanations for their behaviour, they will be lenient in enforcing rules and regulations. However, with inspectees who break the law frequently and show an obstinate attitude, the organizational identity of this group of veterinary inspectors tends to become the salient one, leading them to considerably stricter enforcement.

*The most important thing is actually that you gradually pull the net tighter. If you see an abuse - for example a sow with crippled toes - then you have to register it, record it, and if this happens a couple of times... you keep telling them, but the owners just act dumb .... then at a certain point you can't go on being easy about it ... then you have to make a written report. (R29)*

*If I think that they have a fairly plausible explanation for [overloading the truck]...all right then! For this once I will look the other way. But they know, next time, if there is something similar, they will hang. (R13)*

Because the *mixed professional role identity* is context-dependent, this conceptualization is less helpful as to generally clarification of the meaning and consequences of PSM than *veterinary medicine-focused professional role identity* and *organization-focused professional role identity*. In other words, the explanatory value of the mixed professional role identity depends on external circumstances. Respondents with such a professional role identity could strictly enforce rules in one situation and consider the economic interests of inspectees in another, depending on contextual circumstances.

As expected in identity theory, next to the differences between inspectors' interpretations of 'public interest' according to different types of veterinary inspectors (within-role differences), we also found role-dependent differences. That is, the meaning of the concept of public interest depends not only depend on the ways individuals interpret their (professional) role, but also on the fact that these individuals have multiple – possible conflicting – roles in society. One female respondent, for example, indicated very clearly that the interest she supports is role-dependent. In her professional role of a veterinarian she advocates animal welfare, whereas in her role of a mother she focuses on public health.

*I'm a veterinarian. That's why I'm certainly for animal welfare. But clearly I'm also for public health. I have children of my own. They have to be able to eat safe and healthy food.*  
(R22)

### **Conclusion**

I summarize three important results. First, the findings enable us to differentiate between three different types or conceptualizations of veterinary inspectors rather than one shared professional identity as predicted by the sociology of professionalism: inspectors with a *veterinary medicine-focused professional role identity*, who safeguard animal welfare without sticking rigidly to rule enforcement, sparing the inspectee trouble; inspectors with an *organization-focused professional role identity*, who strongly focus on rule enforcement and safeguarding public health; and inspectors with a *mixed or hybrid professional role identity*, who are more sensitive to external circumstances. The three different professional role identities should be seen as broad categories. A few individuals could be identified who fitted perfectly well to the description of one of the three categories. However, there were also people who only mentioned one aspects of a certain professional role identity. Therefore, an exact distribution cannot be provided. These findings support our proposition that *individuals holding the same profession differ regarding the way they interpret their professional role: they have different professional role identities* (P4). This means that viewing professionalism as professional role identity is valuable: this new approach clarifies the meaning of the concept. In the 'quantitative' part of this dissertation (Chapter 7) I will return to the question of whether this approach is also useful to clarify the behavioural consequences of professionalism.

Second, I have shown that, depending on respondents' type of professional role identity, the meaning of 'public interest' – and hence also the meaning and consequences of PSM – differs. This provides support for my proposition that *professional role identity provides meaning to being public service motivated and is reflected in decision-making in dilemma*

*situations* (P5). In other words, the results suggest that viewing PSM as (professional) role identity-dependent concept rather than as an ideal is useful, because this new approach seems to make the meaning and behavioural consequences of the concept of PSM clearer. Moreover, I have shown that the meaning of ‘public interest’ also depends on the different roles individuals hold in society. I have no data indicating that this, in turn, has behavioural implications, which implies that the second part of the proposition, *the meaning of public service motivation, and its behavioural implications, depend on the interpretations individuals bring to the different roles they occupy in society* (P2) cannot be investigated in this study.

Regarding the final secondary research question *what is the relationship between PSM and professionalism* (SRQ5), the results suggest that PSM and professionalism, seen as professional role identity, are not in conflict. Rather, it seems that the concept of professional role identity gives meaning to PSM. In the ‘quantitative’ analysis, I will return to this question and present additional findings to answer it.

## 5.6 Considerations influencing decision-making in dilemma situations

In the previous section I have shown that PSM and professionalism (viewed as professional role identity) are reflected in the decisions made by veterinary inspectors. In this section I will focus on the respondents’ considerations in situations of conflicting values, and analyse what additional factors play a role in inspectors’ decision-making at these moments. I was able to distinguish two types of considerations in decision-making in dilemma situations. The first relates to the characteristics of the inspectee, and the second to the inspecting activity itself. In Table 2 all considerations are summarized. Next to this, commitment to the inspectee also seemed to play an important underlying role, which was reflected in both inspectee-related and inspection activity-related considerations. However, I need to emphasize strongly that these considerations were only relevant if none of the core values of the NVWA (public health, animal health/animal welfare) was seriously threatened. All veterinary inspectors stated that in situations in which these values were under threat they would closely stick to all rules and regulations and would rigidly enforce compliance. In other words, the type of rule that is broken seems to determine whether additional considerations play a role or not. Next, veterinary inspectors with a mixed professional role identity were particularly sensitive to additional considerations (other than PSM and professionalism).

*Delivery of shipment documents that do not entirely meet the requirements... yeah, that is not really a serious violation of the rules. You do not need to turn an abattoir inside out for that. Such a thing can easily be corrected. But in cases that concern animal welfare, with animals suffering, when they are made to suffer, you can imagine that you have to act immediately. (R24)*

*There are some things... yes, whatever... when you think: just this once I am fine with it: public health or the welfare of animals are not directly under threat. That's when you can leave it like it is for once. It is more important that you know what really matters, what the issues are that you really have to enforce. And yes, enforcing will not be a problem then. (R13)*

### **Inspectee-related considerations**

One important factor influencing inspectors' decision-making seemed to be related to their perceptions of the people they are inspecting. If they had the impression that, in a general sense, the inspectee worked hard and meant well they tended to be lenient, knowing that it is simply not always possible to live up to intentions in each and every situation. For example, they gave 'good' inspectees more time and made arrangements for support.

*Slaughterhouses need time to fix problems. They know if something is not allowed and they do everything to fix it, but you can't fix everything within a quarter of an hour. (R14)*

*Sometimes it is difficult, in situations of overloading. You have to take several steps before you either have to give a warning or make a written report... when you know darned well that the operator can't do anything about it, and they are doing their best to solve the problem. We will always take this into consideration... like, all right he is absolutely doing the best he can... Do we leave it las it is this time or do we make a written report. (R21)*

On the contrary, if the inspectees talked back or did not cooperate, veterinary inspectors tended to be less tolerant of the problems and stories. They kept the reins short and rigidly enforced rule compliance regardless of external circumstances.

*I make a remark about it [the suffering of the animal has probably increased during transport] and if they start talking back I am quickly done with them. (R1)*

*I do remember things, and the next time I see this guy then... I won't say anything, he would deny it anyway, but I remember: 'Johnny or Tommy, a number of times you put one over me. . Yes, you learn to be sharp. (R5)*

Another reason why inspectors distanced themselves from rigid enforcement is that they want to maintain good working relationships with the people they inspect. They visit many

entrepreneurs on a regular basis, and an exaggerated focus on rules and regulations was seen as harmful to these relationships.

*Look, nine out of ten sows have it [damaged withers]', so I do not even notice it any longer. A colleague of mine said: 'These sows cannot be exported'. My answer: 'That's a good one! You just go and inspect the whole lot!' You'll get a lot of flak [from the operators], because you then have to reject 90% of the animals. (R6)*

*For the people from the general inspection services it's pretty easy. They visit an abattoir for one day; they see the weighing receipt, they see the trucks, they measure everything and say: 'Sorry, this one is overloaded'. Written warning or written report. We, on the other hand, we are there every single day and sometimes you have to look closely. 'Okay, it's overloaded by so much'. Sometimes you have to handle a situation with a bit more delicacy. (R13)*

However, I also talked to a small group of inspectors who argued the other way around: inspectors with an organization-focused professional role identity. From their point of view, consistent and rigid rule enforcement is absolutely necessary because otherwise it will become even more difficult to safeguard future compliance with rule and regulations. They explained that if you are not strict in the first place, entrepreneurs will try to push the rules even further in the future.

### ***Inspection-related considerations***

Another set of considerations influencing veterinary inspectors' decision-making refers to the nature of their work. Inspectors clearly indicated that they consider whether their action will have consequences in practice. If, for example, they knew that their efforts were likely to frizzle out because the breach of rules could not be proved in court they were much more likely to refrain from imposing a fine. It seems that inspectors first calculated what the chances were that judges would inflict a penalty on the inspectees. If the chances were considered to be small, some inspectors indicated that they would drop charges.

*And I also think that if you are taken to court, many reports are wiped off the slate immediately. In other words, reports have to be realistic. I think your work should have an effect. (R34)*

*What I do is, I make a list of arguments... why should I do this and why not... and in case I'm brought before court can I argue why I've done it this way... using well-funded arguments. And why not? (R16)*

Veterinary inspectors also indicated that what sometimes kept them from pursuing a penalty was the limited amount of time they have to do their work in. Drastic interventions, for example, entail a lot of time-consuming administrative work. On days with tight working schedules, ‘time’ was described as a consideration in making the decision whether to intervene or not. However, not only in the case of drastic intervention did ‘time’ seem to play a role. Veterinary inspectors indicated that they sometimes tolerated a minor violation of the law while knowing they should intervene simply because everything happens very quickly within a very limited amount of time.

*You don't have heaps of time, but you have to do everything, especially when writing a statement of animal abuse [diergeeneeskundige verklaring]... you have to be very clear and accurate about all the facts and that, that is difficult within that short a time. (R38)*

*Sometimes you arrive somewhere and there is a cow and you think, this cow should really never have been transported. The truck driver have been given a warning or been given warning or statement of animal abuse [diergeeneeskundige verklaring], but then everything happens so quickly... you get there... yeah, well. (R5)*

Next to the expected effect of the intervention and the time pressure, veterinary inspectors also mentioned that it mattered whether a certain behaviour on the part of the inspectee had already been seen and tolerated for years. In other words, prior rule enforcement also played a role. This applied in particular to small companies that have difficulties adapting to specific standards because of their lack of financial capacities and space.

*Yes I think, if you're dealing with small enterprises, small family butchers, where things have happened in a certain way for the past 40 years, maybe... mmmm... it's not that easy then to apply all the rules. (R24)*

*That happens daily. Maybe things have been done wrong for 10 years. In such a case, I think it's not appropriate to write a report. With things like that, you have to have a conversation with the operator. That way you get more done than by writing a report. Because I think 'they've been doing it wrong for 10 years'. It strongly depends on how serious it is and for how long the situation has been as it is. (R18)*

**Table 2** Summary of considerations in dilemma situations

<b>Inspectee-related considerations</b>	<b>Inspection activity-related considerations</b>
Characteristics of the inspectee	Expected effect of intervention
Retaining positive working climate	Time pressure
Facilitate strict rule enforcement in the future	Prior rule enforcement
Size of company	

### ***The link with organizational ethics literature***

Interestingly, these results are partly in accordance with the frequently tested and extensively used typology of ‘ethical climates’ initially developed by Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988) and mentioned in the Introduction above. Maesschalck (2004), for example, used this typology to classify ‘ethical standards’, which he defines as ‘prescriptions about the way public servants should reason in ethical situations’ (p. 472). Victor and Cullen’s (1988) theoretical typology – which combines ethical theory, the constructs of cognitive moral development, and locus of analysis – has two dimensions: ethical criterion and locus of analysis. The ‘ethical criterion’ dimension consists of three propositions that correspond to the three stages (pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional) of Kohlberg’s (1969) moral reasoning: egoism, benevolence, and principle. ‘Egoism’ refers to self-interested behaviour. Individuals who apply the ‘benevolence’ or ‘utilitarianism’ criterion consider the consequences of their decisions in terms of the well-being of the collective. The ‘principle’ criterion focusses on duty founded upon laws, rules, policies and procedures. The ‘locus of analysis’ dimension consists of individual, local and cosmopolitan sources. By combining these two dimensions we can describe the perceptions of how the members of organizations typically make decisions (Victor and Cullen, 1988). This merge results in a 3 x 3 matrix consisting of nine theoretical ethical standards (summarized in Table 3) which partly reflect the veterinary inspectors’ considerations in decision-making identified above.

**Table 3** Nine ethical standards

<b>Locus of analysis/ ethical criterion</b>	<b>Individualism</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Cosmopolitan</b>
<b>Egoism</b>	Self-interest	Organizational interest	Efficiency
<b>Benevolence</b>	Friendship	Team interest	Stakeholder orientation
<b>Principle</b>	Personal morality	Organizational rules	Laws and public interest

Source: Maesschalck, 2004

Most of the considerations found to be relevant in this study can be linked to the ethical criterion of ‘egoism’ at different loci of analysis. ‘Retaining a positive working climate’ and ‘prior rule enforcement’ fit the ethical standard of self-interest. Individuals who applied this criterion aimed to maximize their own interests. They wanted to work in a pleasant environment without encountering antagonism. Neither the organization nor society benefits from this. The ‘facilitating strict rule enforcement in the future’ consideration also refers to maximizing self-interest. In this case, however, the locus of analysis is less clear. If rules are enforced strictly, it is not only the individuals’ interest but also the organizational

interest will benefit because strict rule enforcement is one of the NVWA's key objectives. The ethical standard of efficiency is reflected in 'expected effect of intervention'. Refraining from imposing a fine because the effort is expected to frizzle out is a consideration of efficiency. 'Size of the company', on the other hand, is an example of the ethical criterion 'benevolence'. Deciding to adopt certain standards for small companies matches the ethical standard 'stakeholder orientation'. People who applied this standard considered the well-being of individuals outside the employing organization. They considered the fact that strict and consistent enforcement would lead to bankruptcy in the case of small businesses. None of the considerations reflects the ethical criterion 'principle'. This is not surprising because they relate to constructs such as PSM and professionalism, which were described in the analyses above. In the quantitative analysis I combine and analyse all types of considerations: inspectee-related, inspection-related, and professionalism-related activity (7.1.4).

Next to the parallels with research on the theory of ethical decision-making, there are also parallels with empirical studies on ethical decision-making. In a qualitative study on the mechanisms of ethical decision-making among Belgian police officers, Loyens and De Schrijfer (2012) show that efficiency considerations determine whether police officers break, follow or bend rules. If bending the rules benefits the progress of the investigation, it is considered 'justified'. 'Displacement of responsibility' is another mechanism that was found in both studies. Both Dutch veterinary inspectors and Belgium police officers indicated that they deviated from rules and regulations if significant others were 'okay' with it or acted in a similar way in the past.

### ***Commitment to the inspectee***

Next to inspectee- and inspection-related considerations, commitment to the inspectee seems to be another, more implicit, consideration with an effect on decision-making. If veterinary inspectors had known the inspectee for many years or were attached to the person for various reasons, they were less likely to make a decision that had negative consequences. 'Good guys' are helped as the following example illustrates.

*Next to all the legal and formal stuff, you have to deal with many emotions [...] I assume that colleagues do this too. I had to certify lamas for transport to Belgium. I get to the address and I ring the bell. An old lady opens who is on the verge of collapse. Not very strange, because she was suffering from cancer and if she did not get a kidney transplantation soon these would be her last months. Everything was pointing in that direction. Fortunately, everything worked out all right but it did not look all right at the time [...] The woman's last wish was to go to an international lama show. Everything had been fixed. [...] You need lots of paperwork. For example, blood test results. And there were no results yet. What do you do? [...] In the end, I drove back [to the lady] Saturday morning at 6 am [...] These*

*kinds of decisions are tough. This is the human aspect of the work, which actually I like very much. (R15)*

But also considerations such as ‘retaining a positive working climate’, time pressure and the expected effect of the intervention seem to grow in importance if veterinary inspectors were highly committed. In many cases, veterinary inspectors indicated that they had trouble rigidly enforcing rules and regulations if they were committed to the inspectee, and hence would consider deviating from them.

*Of course, everybody has doubts from time to time about when to intervene. It’s the seriousness of the transgression, and it also depends on the moment. Look, as veterinary inspectors, we are in a special situation because we visit the same business very often. So you develop a relationship with the people who work there. And that does play a role. You can’t deny it. It’s just the way it is. (R24)*

*Look, time matters. It’s a combination. Say, you get to a place where you know the people very well, but you only have half an hour. You have to be at the next location on time. Yeah, what do you do if you find a serious case of animal welfare under threat? (R36)*

### **Conclusion**

Two types of additional considerations (next to professionalism and PSM) influencing veterinary inspectors’ decision-making in dilemma situations – provided neither animal health nor public health are seriously threatened – can be distinguished: inspectee-related and inspection-related considerations. Interestingly, the results are partly in accordance with the frequently tested and extensively used typology of ‘ethical climates’. Next to this, an important underlying, implicit consideration seems to be the degree of commitment to the inspectee. On the basis of these findings, and assuming that considerations lead to actual behaviour, I argue that – next to PSM and professionalism – commitment to the inspectee helps us to understand why veterinary inspectors make certain decisions in dilemma situation. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: *Commitment to the inspectee influences decision-making in dilemma situations.*

