EVALUATION OF SHELTERED DANGEROUS DOGS

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Canine aggression is a very common complaint and carries with it significant consequences for public safety. A dog can be defined “dangerous” when it endangers the physical and/or psychological integrity of humans or other living beings. In Italy, with national law 281/91, the government regulated stray animal management by making it illegal to kill dogs unless they were seriously or incurably ill, or proved dangerous (Dehasse, 2002). Therefore, it is important and necessary to be able to assess the degree of a dog’s dangerousness to avoid public safety risks (Bollen and Horowitz, 2008).

This study sought to define an objective method to assess the dangerousness of sheltered dogs. Dogs showing serious problems, like aggression towards people, are much more likely to be returned in shelters (Wells and Hepper, 2000). Until now there have not been parameters to guide veterinarians in the evaluation of a dog’s dangerousness and to provide an objective evaluation, based on scientific guidelines, that may lead to euthanasia. The clinician has been able to interpret the law in a too extensive or too restrictive way, resulting in too many or too few euthanasias. A working group composed of members of the health authority and university specialists have designed an assessment using behavioral and physical parameters (gender, size, age, mandibular thickness, adaptation in the shelter, clinical pathologies that can trigger aggressiveness in dog), in addition to tests to predict a dog’s reaction. Among the behavioral parameters, we have considered dog’s aggressiveness towards humans (inside and outside the dog’s run and during the clinical examination), and reactivity towards other dogs. For each behavioral and physical parameter we chose 3 or 4 ranks associated with a variable score. We also focused on how to create a specific score for dogs with a previous bite history. This assessment report is now employed at the short term shelter in Milan (Italy). We are testing the majority of the dogs housed in this shelter with this tool.

Key words: canine aggression; dangerous dog; shelter

References


THE FATE OF CATS ADOPTED FROM RESCUE SHELTERS IN CANADA

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The percentage of animals returned to rescue shelters following adoption is a frequently used measure of adoption success, however, the fate of animals that remain in the community is often overlooked. In response to this issue, this study evaluated the fate of kittens one year after their adoption from shelters in Canada. Subjects were kittens (n = 583) adopted from thirty rescue shelters (members of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies) between the ages of 2-4 months. When these kittens reached one year of age, their guardians were requested to complete a questionnaire regarding their cat. Some of the guardians (8.7%) were not contactable, either because they had moved or the contact details provided to the shelter were invalid. Of the guardians that were contacted, 67.8% responded to the survey, and of these, 9.8% no longer had their kittens. Of these 35 kittens, 8 had been killed in road traffic accidents, 7 had been returned to the shelter, 4 had gone missing and presumed dead, 4 had been given away, 4 killed by coyotes, 1 killed by a dog, and 7 others died due to illness. When asked whether they were likely to keep their kitten, 85.2% of those guardians who still had their cats reported ‘Definitely Yes’,
1.7% ‘Yes’, 0.3% were ‘ Unsure’, 0.3% reported probably not and 1.1% reported definitely not. Gender, neuter status and coat length were not identified as risk factors for accidental death before one year of age, however kittens that were given access to the outdoors were five times more likely to have an accidental death than kittens that were kept indoors (7.8% outdoor versus 1.6% of indoor kittens; \( X^2 = 5.69, \text{df} = 1, p < 0.05 \)). Therefore, advising guardians on the implications of allowing cats outdoors should be an important area of education for to rescue shelters.

**Key words:** kitten; behavior; shelter; adoption

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**CHEMICAL COMMUNICATION IN BIRDS: RECENT FINDINGS**

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Birds are often considered to be creatures which concentrate on the use of auditory and visual input. A dramatic contradiction to this approach lies in the normal development of the olfactory cavities and bulbs as illustrated by Bang and Cobb (1968), who studied over 100 different avian species. Since the publication of this pioneering research, several authors have described different odorous secretions in birds and identified their functions during sexual and maternal behavior, and in detecting and avoiding predators. To better understand the sensory world of animals for an accurate evaluation of possible behavior problems, we review this neglected field. As a result of anatomical and physiological research, birds are no longer seen as anosmic animals. The complexity of the avian olfactory system and capabilities is well described. Scents play a role in food location in kiwis, vultures and petrels (Balthazart & Taziaux, 2009), and in recognition of familiar places like the nest with chicks (Porter et al., 1999) for petrels and relatives (Hagelin, 2007). Moreover, chemical signals have been shown to play a major role in predator detection (Roth et al., 2008), sex recognition (Bonadonna et al., 2009), specific partner recognition (Bonadonna et al., 2007) and mother-to-chick communication (Pageat, 2003). The uropygial gland (preening gland) is a major producer of odorous secretions (Bohnnet et al., 1991), but some other glands are also involved. These secretions not only play a role as primers but also as releasers of hormonal secretions (Madec, 2008). Maternal uropygial secretions are responsible for attracting the chicks when facing a stressful event (Madec et al., 2008), modulating corticosterone release and heterophil to lymphocyte ratios, and protecting the growth of the chicks against the detrimental effects of stress.

The recent development of our understanding of avian chemical communication provides potential new strategies in the management of bird welfare for both pet and livestock species. Using chemical communication can be a promising way to enrich the environment of captive wild birds as well as to improve the quality of life in poultry.  

**Key words:** bird; behavior; chemical communication; maternal uropygial secretions

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**References**


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**THE RELINQUISHMENT OF RABBITS TO RESCUE SHELTERS IN CANADA**

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Most surveys of animal relinquishment to shelters have focused on dogs and cats; however, studies into the reasons why pet rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) enter shelters are scant. Such studies have the potential to facilitate the development of educational materials for prospective and current rabbit guardians who may be at risk of surrendering their pets. In response to this issue, this study describes a survey of rabbits admitted to and adopted from rescue shelters in Canada. Thirty shelters (members of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies) were surveyed. Over a three-year period of April 2007 to June 2008, 553 pet rabbits were relinquished to one or more of these shelters. A total of 467 (84.5%) of these were kept indoors, and 86 (15.5%) were kept outdoors. Outdoors versus 1.6% of indoor kittens; \( X^2 = 5.69, \text{df} = 1, p < 0.05 \). Therefore, advising guardians on the implications of allowing cats outdoors should be an important area of education for to rescue shelters.

**Key words:** indoor; outdoor; risk factors; relinquishment; rabbit; shelter; Canada

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**The Relinquishment of Rabbits to Rescue Shelters in Canada**

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