CRITERIA FOR ADOPTING DOGS FROM SHELTERS

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Abstract
The present paper conveys the results obtained by applying a behaviour evaluation test to dogs in shelters, The Experiments took place in a shelter in Timisoara, and their purpose was to differentiate those dogs which, from a behavioural point of view, fulfil adoption criteria from those which present various disorders that make the adoption process difficult. In order to carry out the study a number of 30 dogs have been tested, the basic test criteria where the basic commands such as sit, stay, fetch a toy, taking away the food bowl and the reaction to the doll. The study concluded with the fact that all 30 dogs could be adopted, showing only minor behavioural disorders due to the prolonged stay at the shelter.

Key words*: dog, shelter, adoption.*

INTRODUCTION

Dogs in shelters tend to respond variously, due to the conditions of that living environment: some adapt, others, as an adapting mechanism, manifest various behaviour disorders (excessive barking, anxiety, aggressiveness), and others, which under no circumstance manage to integrate, give in (De Palma et al 2005) .

One of the animal shelter purposes is to reintegrate dogs and to offer them for adoption. For this a dog behaviour evaluation is needed, as a result of which those animals will be kept which correspond.

At the moment of the evaluation, a dog can respond favourably, and be offered up for adoption, but in time it can manifest behaviour undesired by the owner resulting in a new abandonment (Miklosi 2009). For an efficient classification, criteria are necessary which should allow for a better evaluation, as correct and as real as possible, which should hold in time and based on which the dog should be able to be put up for adoption.

Dogs classified as non-corresponding for adoption, represent a great challenge for the staff carrying out the adoptions, due to the fact that some of these dogs might be rehabilitated through special programmes, used for this purpose. Those individuals, which even after application of the specific programme methods do not show improvement, are considered hard to recover (Svartberg 2007).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out at a shelter in Timisoara, where a number of 30 digs were chosen from 360, the selection being based on staff declarations, the dogs being subsequently tested on the base of some criteria, considered as basic commands: come, sit, stay, followed by fetching a toy, removing of the food bowl, and the reaction to a doll.

The command *come* asks the dog to answer a call. Dogs can answer immediately. If there is no result, the command is repeated three times, insisting on a stricter tone until the dog comes (Vas et al 2008.).

Sit and stay are commands which any dog with a previous owner and which has been educated should know. A positive answer is considered the case when the dog sits and stays, no matter the time interval it maintains the posture. If the dog does not sit after it has been requested of him for three times, it can be helped by applying pressure with the hand in his backside region.

The *food bowl* test actually tracks signs of dog possessiveness and aggressiveness. The dog receives a bowl of food and with the help of an artificial hand an attempt to take the food bowl

away will be undertaken a few minutes later. With this criterion, dogs can answer positively, not being bothered by the removal of the food bowl, or they can respond aggressively, as a result to a long hunger period, or due to the fact that they are dominant dogs (Serpell et al 2001).

Interaction with a doll consists in introducing a doll of a 2 year old child size in the room. The purpose is to observe possible aggressive behaviours which the dogs might manifest towards a child in a future family. Dogs can manifest positive or, on the contrary, aggressive behaviour (Serpell et al 2001).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Of the 30 dogs evaluated by the above mentioned test:

- at the command come 25 dogs were considered to answer positively, even if they did not respond at the first call;
- sit and stay were executed by 20 dogs, which means that they had a previous owner and know the commands;
- only one dog manifested possessiveness towards the food bowl, most probably due to prolonged hunger;
- with the doll 25 dogs responded favourably sniffing its face and wagging their tail, some of the dogs manifested playfulness, showing desire to play with the doll. (fig. 1)
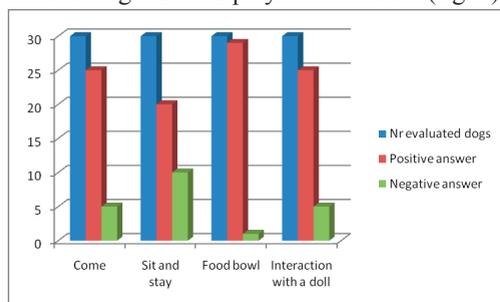

Fig. 1. Evaluation results of basic command answer in dogs

CONCLUSIONS

Given the fact more docile dogs were brought, the results were in favour of the adoption, of the 30 dogs, 20 met the requirements, 10 need special training, after which the adoption process may be carried out.

The tested dogs corresponded from a behavioural point of view for adoption, presenting minor behaviour disorders which do not represent an impediment for adoption.

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