

Veterinary Observations: Pet-to-Owner Relationships

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Author Note

My name is Chelsea McKinnies. I am currently a 16-year-old rising senior who lives in Brooklyn. I also attend N.Y.C Lab School for Collaborative Studies in Chelsea, Manhattan. In the future, my goal is to become a Veterinarian. This research was executed to boost people's general knowledge about animals' well-being and how to recognize when the care for your pet needs to be evaluated. Contact: chelseamckinnies1@gmail.com

Abstract

It's been observed that out of our world's total population, 57% of people have at least one pet in their household. Dogs, however, are the most popular animal, being present in around one in three homes worldwide. This proposal refers to prior surveys that observed the responses dogs have in different circumstances that are potentially stress-inducing, then compares the initial connection the dog has with its owner to find a link. This proposal also displays that the majority of dogs that did pass the stress test have a good connection with their owners, while dogs with a bad connection often fail.

Introduction

Pet care is often a question for people going about their everyday activities. Sometimes people need the reassurance of “Did I feed my cat enough today?”, Maybe it’s the doubt of “ I should’ve walked my dog one last time”, or it could even be the simple question of “Is my pet happy with me?”. But in reality, the relationship one has with their pet is much more than performing the basic tasks to keep it alive.

What some pet owners might not recognize is that pets experience stress just like we do, and a multitude of outside factors unrelated to us can cause it. However, it is people's job as owners to try to raise their pets in the best condition that doesn’t bring on any excessive tension; and many can gauge how well they’re doing with how their animals act in public.

In this paper, I propose that an animal's behavior outside their home speaks a lot about how they live inside it. The more open and relaxed your pet is on the outside is a useful indicator that on the inside, they’re just as comfortable. And the same ideology applies if your pet is closed off, and more aggressive.

Methods

Observing previous literature on a topic you’re interested in is crucial for obtaining an understanding of how to approach research; it provides a guideline on what data your studies

should collect, and how said data should be used. However, the kinds of literature one can use varies.

Not all literature will contain all the information you need to have a thorough method, but that depends on what you explore.

In my research, I reviewed survey-based publications.

Although they might not have a definitive experimental or control group, the sources provide great insight into their proposals.

I needed resources that generated results from their specifically developed surveys to observe how pets interact in a clinic. Since this is a big idea in my research question, my keywords reflected that topic (pets, companions, etc).

Data gathered from the literature will be analyzed to provide defined statistics on the difference in interactions between a positive and negative pet-to-owner relationship.

This is determined by an animal's behavior towards the caretaker, vets, and other individuals.

Discussion

The findings of the two studies provide excellent examples of ways testing for animals can be done without inflicting any actual harm on them.

Both studies had a common objective of observing dogs to gain more knowledge about their behaviors and habits, specifically how they respond to stress. The assumed method used by the studies would be putting the dogs through a series of 'stress tests', and then taking note of their responses. However, doing so could potentially lead to the physical and physiological deterioration of the dogs. (González-Ramírez et al, 2018) Instead, both studies relayed mainly

surveys that were to be completed by the owners, and minor physical tests that the dogs were assumed to be used to. (Mariti et al, 2016).

The information collected was intended to learn more about what dogs experience at home with their owner; which then influenced the type of ‘tests’ the dogs were exposed to. Most are games of fetch and the option to accept treats. The implementation of these types of studies being conducted in the Veterinary field that bypass the harm of any animals is a huge game-changer. It forces clinics to be more creative with their research, pushing the goal to develop a wider range of tests so they can observe animals they couldn’t test without bringing harm before.

In addition, there’s the potential of gradually gaining more trust from pet owners, ensuring that their pets can be helped without worrying about harm.

Conclusion

The goal of this proposal is to encourage pet owners to genuinely try to bond with their pets. People often adopt pets to find a companion, to fill this ‘emptiness’ someone might feel that they have in their life. But what’s often forgotten is the only thing that pets know is their owners.

This proposal presents a big difference in a pet's attitude when their owner goes the extra mile for them and that welfare is returned to the owner as well.

References

González-Ramírez M.T., Landero-Hernández R., and Vanegas-Farfano M., The effects of dog-owner relationship on perceived stress and happiness, *Human-Animal Interaction Bulletin*, 2018.

Mariti C., Pierantoni L., Sighieri C., and Gazzano A., Guardians' Perceptions of Dogs' Welfare and Behaviors Related to Visiting the Veterinary Clinic, *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 2016.