Pet Relinquishment Prevention

Each year, more than 4 million family pets are surrendered to US animal shelters. Understanding the reasons for pet relinquishment is the first step toward addressing the problem. This study was a review and meta-analysis of existing research. The objectives were to characterize why people end their relationships with their dogs and to assess the level of concordance among existing studies.

Of 115 primary research articles on the topic, 18 fit the inclusion criteria. Most were observational studies using owner-reported reasons for surrendering their dog. Most common reasons for surrender to a shelter were: moving; behavioral problems; owner health/illness; cost; and human expectation. Reasons for surrender for euthanasia were: geriatric issues; disease; behavior problems; and injury. Meta-analysis on 13 studies showed considerable heterogeneity for all factors except surrender because of owner health/illness, for which an overall estimate of 4.6% was obtained. All other factors failed to reach significance. Statistical power was low because so few studies were used.

Differences in methodology among the included studies made statistical comparison challenging. Owner questionnaires not only introduced possible reporting bias but also increased heterogeneity. For example, some may have instructed owners to check 1 box whereas others said to check all that apply. The authors conclude that more investigation is warranted. Future studies should adopt a standardized methodology and be more transparent, which would allow results to be pooled and analyzed in a more meaningful way. *Study supported by Purina PetCare Canada.*

Commentary

Many animals at risk of relinquishment are likely to be better served by safety net programs that provide education and resources to help keep pets in existing homes rather than by programs that focus on sheltering and rehoming. Accurate information about reasons for relinquishment is critical to enabling organizations to focus on providing services most likely to successfully prevent relinquishment. Although common reasons for relinquishment have been previously studied, there is a large amount of variation in the frequency with which they have been reported. Factors influencing this variation remain largely unknown, and extrapolation of these findings to individual shelters should be done with caution. Ideally, shelters should collect data specific to their own communities, thereby enabling organizations to develop relevant, effective intervention programs.—*Stephanie Janeczko, DVM, MS, DABVP, CAWA*

Source

Lambert K, Coe J, Niel L, Dewey C, Sargeant JM. A systematic review and meta-analysis of the proportion of dogs surrendered for dog-related and owner-related reasons. *Prev Vet Med.* 2015;118(1):148-160.

FOCUS

Epiglottic Retroversion

Epiglottic retroversion—a rare, poorly understood condition in dogs—occurs when the epiglottis is episodically retroflexed into the rima glottidis, causing airway obstruction. This case report described the management of epiglottic retroversion. The patient was presented with clinical signs associated with upper airway obstruction. Multiple surgical strategies were attempted; all failed. Ultimately, subtotal epiglottectomy across the widest base of the epiglottis was performed, with resolution of clinical signs through 17 months postoperatively.

Commentary

Clinical signs associated with epiglottic retroversion mimic other causes of upper airway obstruction in dogs with similar conformation and present a true emergency. Diagnosis requires meticulous airway examination and an understanding of normal epiglottic and rima glottidis position. Specific recommendations cannot be made from the few isolated reported cases in dogs. Further work is needed to understand the underlying disease mechanism, perhaps guided by other species (eg, horses) that experience similar, more frequent epiglottic entrapment in order to direct optimal treatment.—*Jason Bleedorn, DVM, DACVS*

Source

Mullins R, McAlinden AB, Goodfellow M. Subtotal epiglottectomy for the management of epiglottic retroversion in a dog. *J Small Anim Pract.* 2014;55(7):383-385.