

Breed differences and effect of early environment on social behaviour in dog puppies

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The effect of early rearing environment

- Most of the knowledge is based on studies carried on laboratory
- Early environment influences the emotional stability of puppies in isolation (Gazzano et al., 2008)

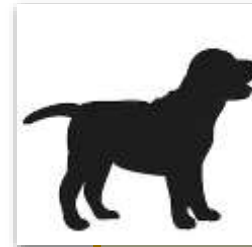


Effects of breed and environmental variables on puppies social behaviour towards humans

- 8-week-old Czechoslovakian wolf dog & Labrador puppies
- Data collected about the rearing environment
- Test battery representing typical experiences of pet dog puppies



Object Choice Test



Recall Test



Hold & Pet Test



A little hint...



Thank you for
your attention
and see you at
poster #44

Breed differences and effect of early environment on social behaviour in dog puppies

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INTRODUCTION

The effect of pet dogs' early rearing environment has recently been investigated extensively. Most of the studies have focused on the effect of early experiences on laboratory dogs and proved that early experiences in a puppy's life markedly affect the adult dog's behaviour (Smith and Folmer, 1985). However, the subjects involved in these experiments were mainly representatives of the pet dog population because, due to their special experience, they may have not developed their maximum capacities. Some of the subsequent studies produced mixed results, suggesting that specific rearing situations have a discernible effect only if the puppies that receive the stimulation are compared to relatively deprived animals (Fisher and Neuman 2011).

We investigated the effect of environmental variables on puppies' social behaviour towards humans. We tested 8-week-old dog puppies (N=119) from two breeds, Labrador and Cockertriever wolf-dog in a series of tests designed to evaluate behavioural parameters indicating their tendency to interact socially with humans in various situations.

MATERIALS & METHODS

SETS COLLECTED
Rearing conditions experienced from the mother: environmental enrichment

We report here the results collected in 2 tests of a longer test battery.

OBJECT CHOICE TEST
The puppies were allowed to explore the testing area, where the mother, the Experimenter and a toy were present.

RECALL TEST
The experimenter called the puppy and praised it, then remained motionless.

HOLD & PET TEST
After being held in the experimenter's arms for 1 min, the puppy was released.

RESULTS

OBJECT CHOICE TEST

- Cockertriever dogs with dogs were more likely to interact with the toy (ORT: $\chi^2 = 11.76, p = 0.001$) and explore the area (ORT: $\chi^2 = 9.78, p = 0.008$).
- Puppies reared from the mother spent more time interacting with the toy (RT: $\chi^2 = 16.59, p = 0.001$).
- Puppies housed in a kennel spent more time close to the Experimenter than puppies living in the home (ORT: $\chi^2 = 15.59, p = 0.000$).

RECALL TEST

- Cockertriever dogs with dogs were more likely to approach the experimenter (ORT: $\chi^2 = 12.47, p = 0.001$).

HOLD & PET TEST

- All subjects spent more time close to the Experimenter (ORT: $\chi^2 = 7.48, p = 0.006$).

The general effect of rearing conditions and breed had an effect on human interaction only in the puppies close to the experimenter in the toy using (see Visual Abstract and of AHA).