



Annual Review of Cases 1994

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The data for this report has been provided by some of the members of the APBC enabling the target figure of 1500 cases to be met. This allows the extraction of significant information that also reflects seasonal variation. As such, the figures do not represent the total number of cases seen by the membership.

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Introduction

The aim of this report was to provide a basic overview of the type of problems encountered by the APBC during the year. This data was then analysed in terms of monthly and seasonal variation and gender differences for the most frequently recorded behaviour problems for both dogs and cat.

The behaviour data was considered as percentages of the total recorded behaviour. Contributions of data from members was not necessarily consistent across the 12 month period so this was considered essential to avoid discrepancies between months.

It is also worth noting that the monthly data is undoubtedly affected by owner anticipation of problems occurring and the latency of owners approaching APBC members after the problems have occurred.

Breakdown of cases submitted

- DOGS
- Males: 1139
- % Neutered 40
- No of problems 1788

- Females 668
- % Neutered 47
- No of problems 981

- CATS
- Males 46
- % Neutered 91

- No of problems 62
- Females 43
- % Neutered 88
- No of problems 62

Average number of problems per dog - 1.55 (1.57 per male and 1.47 per female)

Average number of problems per cat - 1.4 (1.35 per male and 1.44 per female)

CANINE BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

'Aggression towards people' was the most frequently recorded behaviour problem. This category covers 'Dominance aggression', 'Fear aggression' and 'Territorial aggression' and is considered in terms of monthly and seasonal variations later in this report.

The 'Others' category included behaviours such as coprophagia, predatory behaviour, mounting, scent marking, escapology, obsessive compulsive behaviours, stereotypies, hyperactive behaviour and diet sensitivity.

Although nuisance attention-seeking behaviours and training problems were frequently recorded, they were usually correlated with another behaviour. For example, 'Attention seeking' - 'Dominance aggression towards people' or 'Attention seeking' - 'Separation problems', 'Training' - 'Territorial aggression' or 'Training' - 'Dominance aggression towards people'.

Comparison Between Dogs and Bitches

Considering dogs and bitches separately, clearly indicates gender differences. 'Aggression towards people', 'Aggression towards dogs', 'Nuisance attention-seeking', 'Training' and 'Food-guarding' were more common in dogs but 'Separation problems', 'Fear', 'Inappropriate chase' and 'Toilet training' showed a higher incidence in bitches.

Breakdown of the incidence of aggression in dogs and bitches

The graphs suggested that dogs are more aggressive than bitches, by considering each category of aggression separately, we can see that bitches show more fear aggression to both people and other dogs. In addition, the recorded cases of rank aggression between canines in the same home was seen to be almost equal in dogs and bitches.

Monthly and Seasonal Trends.

The seasons were determined as follows:-

- Spring - March, April and May
- Summer - June, July and August
- Autumn - September, October and November
- Winter - December, January and February

Dominance Aggression Towards People

There is a slightly higher incidence of dominance aggression during spring than in summer or autumn. Winter shows the lowest incidence.

Fear Aggression Towards People

Higher incidence during the summer months, dogs generally come into more contact with other dogs in the summer.

Territorial Aggression Towards People

An increase in June, July and August that may be attributed to displays of territorial aggression in the garden as well as in the home.

Rank Order Aggression Between dogs Within Home

An increase during the winter months (and particularly during December and January) can be assumed to be related to the Christmas period. At this time dogs are generally confined more and the owners can interact with their pets in a more relaxed manner.

Fear Aggression Towards Dogs - Away From Home

Interestingly, although dogs come into contact with more dogs during the summer months, the increase is very minor. The percentages for the summer months are also similar to the winter figures, perhaps related to the warm weather in November 1994

Aggression towards Dogs Away From Home - Other Reasons

A similar seasonal trend to the above graph and is perhaps explained by the same reasons.

Problems When Separated From Owners

For the purpose of this report, 'Separation problems' have been analysed as a single category. However, the three categories recorded by the APBC members were 'Destructive behaviour', 'Loss of toilet control' and 'Vocalisations'. Of the total number of 'Separation problems' submitted these three categories occurred as follows -

- *Destructive behaviour - 47%*
- *Loss of toilet control - 20.8%*
- *Vocalisations - 32.2%*

By considering the monthly data, we can see that there are peaks in January and May i.e. after the Christmas and Easter period when owners are at home with their dogs for longer periods of time. The data then increases through to a larger increase in August, this is perhaps related to school holidays, summer holidays and kennelling.

Seasonally, the data follows the monthly trends.

Fearful and Phobic Behaviour

Fearful and phobic behaviour is consistently higher in bitches, except during October.

The large percentage in November is obviously related to Fireworks Night on November 5th. The increase in the data prior to November could be an indication of owners anticipating problems.

During April, May and November of 1994 there were several thunder and lightning storms and these may be reflected in the higher figures for these months.

Feline Behaviour Problems

Indoor marking was the most commonly recorded behaviour problem. The occurrence of its components was as follows-

Spraying - 95.1%

Middening - 0%

Scratching - 4.9%

Aggression towards people and cats were also considered in terms of their components

To people - Petting - 36.8%, Learned - 21.2%, Re-directed - 15.8%, Dominance - 10.5%, Predatory - 10.5%, Food guarding - 5.2%.

To cats - Social - 85% and Territorial - 15%

Comparison Between Males and Females

It appears that 'Indoor Marking', 'Aggression towards cats' and 'Bonding' problems were more common in males. In contrast, females show a higher incidence of 'Aggression towards people', 'Inappropriate toileting' and 'Fears / Phobias'.

Unfortunately the quantity of cat data submitted was quite low so this data can only give an indication of possible trends.

Conclusions

Dogs

The top three cases presented to members of the APBC during the year were aggression towards people, aggression towards dogs and separation problems.

Rank order aggression between canines within the home appears to increase during and after the Christmas period.

Separation problems are more likely to occur after Christmas, after Easter and during the summer months.

Bitches appear to show more fear aggression towards people and other dogs, more fear/phobic behaviour, more separation problems and more problems with toilet training than dogs.

Cats

The top 3 cases presented to members of the APBC in this year were indoor marking, aggression towards people and cats and inappropriate toileting.

Spraying was the most common form of indoor marking and was prevalent in males. 91% of male cats are also neutered.

Females, in line with bitches, seem to show a higher incidence of aggression towards people, fear behaviours and inappropriate toileting.