



Annual Review of Cases 2002

Introduction

This APBC Annual Review of Cases, based on the data of participating members, has been published each year since 1994. This year, in addition to analysing trends in the data for dogs and cats collected during 2002, findings from previous Annual Reviews have been used to highlight some issues. For cases involving dogs, separation problems have been looked at in some detail, and the possibility that rescued dogs are more likely to be referred for separation problems when compared with those from other sources has been revisited.

The purpose of the review is to examine trends in behavioural problems seen by members and to look at relationships between the presentation of certain types of behavioural problem and other aspects of pets' lives. It is not the intention of the authors to imply causal relationships between these factors and the problems, since the data are necessarily anecdotal rather than the results of controlled scientific experiment. However, anecdotal evidence is not without value, and may highlight factors that need to be taken into account when, for example, rescued dogs are re-homed, or a particular breed is recommended as a pet. It should also be born in mind that this review is about a population of animals referred for behaviour therapy and may not reflect trends in the general population.

Cases Submitted

Data relating to a total of 802 dogs were submitted in 2002 while cat cases submitted related to 230 animals. The breakdown of these cases into males and females can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Breakdown of cases

	Dogs		Cats	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Number of animals	514 (64%)	288 (36%)	123 (54%)	97 (46%)
% Neutered	64%	67%	98%	96%
Number of problems	934 (64%)	521 (36%)	168 (55%)	139 (45%)

The average number of problems per dog - 1.8 (1.8 for each sex)

The average number of problems per cat - 1.4 (1.4 for each sex)

Over the past eight years the proportion of male dogs seen has remained steady at between 61% and 64%, with the exception of 2000 when the figure was 58%. The proportion of canines neutered has increased steadily since 1994 when only 40% of dogs and 47% of bitches were neutered. An increase, although less dramatic, can also be seen in cats where 91% of toms and 88% of queens were neutered in 1994.

Breeds

In this year, as in the past seven years, the three types of dog most commonly referred have been Border Collies, crossbreeds and German Shepherds. Over the years the order in which these appear has altered, although crossbreeds are always the most numerous. It is likely that this reflects the number of crossbreeds in the general population, although this is difficult to estimate.

Most Common Dog Breeds Referred:	Most Frequent Kennel Club Registrations 2002:
Crossbreed	Labrador
Border Collie	German Shepherd
German Shepherd	Cocker Spaniel
Jack Russell Terrier	Springer Spaniel
Springer Spaniel	Staffordshire Bull Terrier
Labrador	Golden Retriever
Cocker Spaniel	West Highland White Terrier

It should be noted that, although Border Collies do not appear in the list of most frequent registrations, many of that breed owned by the general public are obtained from farm or domestically bred stock and are not registered with the kennel club. It is therefore impossible to estimate the size of the population of Border Collies and unregistered working sheepdogs.

Labradors are by far the most numerous breed registered in 2002 with 35,996 registrations compared with 14,177 German Shepherds, which are the second most frequently registered. However, members of the APBC reported only 29 cases involving Labradors, while German Shepherds accounted for 51.

Cats

Since pedigree cats are not common in the general population of cats, it is always the case that the most frequently referred feline breed is the domestic short-hair, which is the common 'moggie'.

Most common cat breeds referred

Domestic short-hair
Siamese
Burmese
Birman

Persian
Oriental
British short-hair

Breakdown of Canine problems

In both dogs and bitches the most frequent problems seen were aggression towards people and towards other dogs, closely followed by separation problems (see Figure 2). Fears and phobias were also prevalent, while problems during car travel, repetitive behaviours and self-mutilation, and attention seeking were the other behaviours for which canines were referred.

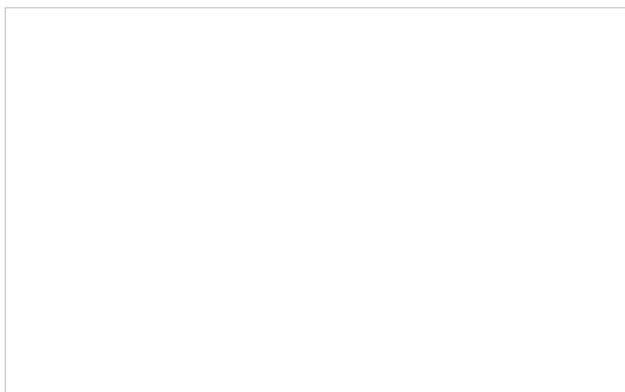


Figure 2. Breakdown of problems seen in dogs and bitches as a percentage of total number of problems seen.

AP = aggression towards people AD = aggression towards dogs, SP = separation problems, FP = fears and phobias, CP - problems in the car, AS = attention seeking, ChP = chasing problems.

Since 1997, when the present method of categorising cases began, aggression towards people has been the problem most frequently treated. This includes aggression motivated by fear and status related aggression. The second most common problem has been aggression towards dogs, which includes fear-based aggression to strange dogs and rank related aggression towards dogs within the home. Separation problems have been the third most frequently seen problem for the past six years.

The data used in this section are broad categories of behaviour, many of which consist of complex suites of behaviour. When each behaviour is analysed individually, the most frequent behaviours seen were learned attention seeking and fear-based aggression towards other dogs.

For some of the behaviours seen there were clear gender differences. Dogs were slightly more likely to be referred for aggression towards people than bitches, while bitches were more likely to be referred for separation problems.

Although it appears that the same proportions of dogs and bitches were referred for aggression towards other canines, when the overall category of aggression towards other dogs is separated into aggression to canines away from home and aggression to dogs in the same household, gender differences do appear. Of males referred for aggression towards other canines 80% had been aggressive away from home, compared with 66% of females, while 19% of dogs had been aggressive to canines living in the same household compared to 34% of bitches, as Figure 3 illustrates.

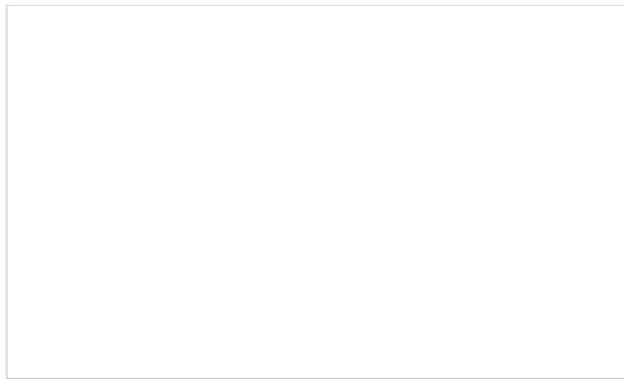


Figure 3. Comparison of cases of dogs and bitches referred for aggression towards other canines living in the same household and canines encountered away from home.

This suggests that bitches seen this year were more likely to be aggressive to canines they live with than were dogs. However, when actual numbers are considered, 64% of all the canines seen for aggression to other dogs were dogs while only 36% were female. For both sexes the proportion of this number that were due to aggressive interactions with other dogs in the home was 12%. Exactly the same number of dogs and bitches were referred for aggression at home.

Separation Problems

Separation problems consist of any problem behaviour that occurs when the dog is separated from its owners. These can include destruction, vocalisation or loss of toilet control due to anxiety; destruction or vocalisation in order to regain the owner's attention, during the night for example; and destruction and vocalisation as occupational devices when a dog is left alone.

True separation anxiety, which is due to over-attachment to one person, is only one type of separation problem occurring in dogs. Other causes of anxiety when left may be fear of being alone, or a traumatic event such as a burglary. It is possible that anticipation of the owner's anger on returning may have an effect on the dog's behaviour while it is alone, but the evidence for this is anecdotal. Some dogs may salivate excessively or even vomit when left. In addition a dog may become destructive or lose toilet control because of fear of a specific stimulus, such as a sound, when it is alone. Such a dog may or may not be able to cope better with that sound if its owners are present.

In Figure 2 it can be seen that there is a higher incidence of referral for separation problems occurring in bitches than in dogs. Table 2 shows that both sexes display similar behaviours in similar proportions across the whole range of separation problems, with one or two exceptions. The figures in this table add up to more than 100% because some animals show more than one type of behaviour.

Table 2. Percentage of dogs and bitches referred for separation problems that display particular separation-related behaviours.

		Dogs	Bitches
Anxiety	Destruction	27.7%	31.9%
	Toileting	50.0%	36.2%
	Vocalisation	15.3%	14.9%

Attention Seeking	Destruction	4.2%	4.3%
	Vocalisation	15.3%	10.6%
Fear	Destruction	4.2%	14.9%
	Toileting	1.4%	4.3%
Non-fearful behaviours	Destruction	6.9%	8.5%
	Vocalisation	5.5%	8.5%
	Redirected aggression	0%	2.1%

In the problems related to separation reported in 2002, 61% in bitches and 71% in dogs consisted of one or more symptoms of separation anxiety. In both sexes the most common symptom was toileting as can be seen in Figure 4.

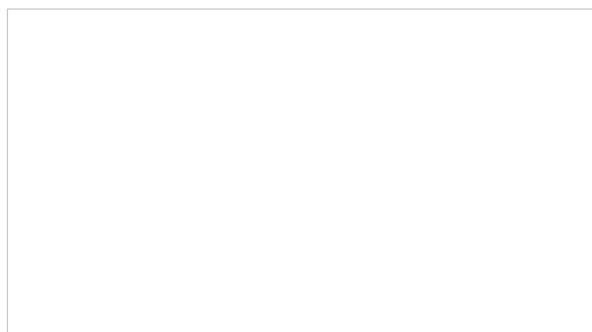


Figure 4. Incidence of destruction, toileting or vocalisation as signs of separation anxiety in dogs and bitches as a proportion of all separation problems.

In cases of attention seeking when left (Table 2) vocalisation was the most common sign in both sexes, while in non-fearful separation related cases males were more likely to be destructive and females were equally likely to be destructive or to vocalise. However, in separation problems related to fear, destruction was most frequently seen, in both sexes. The trend for both sexes to manifest separation related behaviours in the same way was found with all other types of separation problem.

Effects of environment.

The effect of early environment on behaviour can be profound and traumatic events during a dog's life can affect its ability to cope with situations such as being left alone. Many rescued dogs suffer from separation problems, but it is often difficult to determine whether this is due to the trauma of losing their original 'pack' or whether the dog was put into a rescue situation because of an existing separation problem.

In the Annual Review of Cases 2000 it was found that rescued dogs were over-represented in the population of dogs with separation problems. Figure 5 suggests that this was also the case in 2002, since 18% of those canines presenting with separation problems had come from a rescue environment compared with 14% from a kennel and 12% from a domestic background.

When the data are separated into dogs and bitches it can be seen (Figure 6) that the increased number from a rescue background is only true of bitches, with 23 % having this type of history.

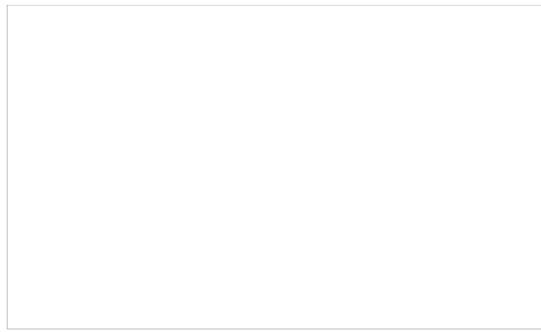


Figure 5. Percentage of canines presenting with a separation problem which came from rescue, kennel or domestic environment.

In males, those showing separation problems are equally likely to have come from a kennel background and slightly less likely to have been brought up in a domestic situation.

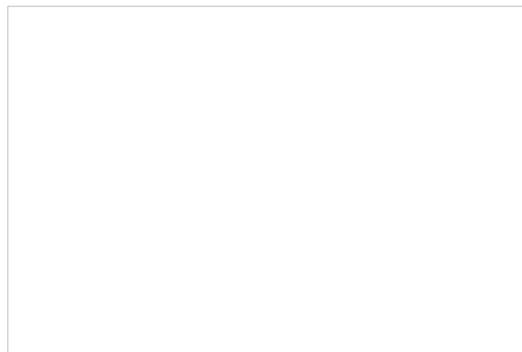


Figure 6. Percentage of dogs and bitches presenting with separation problems which came from rescue, kennel or domestic environment.

It is possible that the higher reported incidence of separation problems in bitches in 2002 is due to chance. However, if an evolutionary mechanism for this difference were sought, it could be suggested that it is more important for a female to remain with the pack since she is unlikely to be successful in rearing pups alone. Natural selection would therefore tend to favour females that had a strong drive to remain with the pack and would result in a gender difference between males and females with regard to ability to cope when left alone. If this were the case, then in rescued animals the stressful experience of being permanently separated from the original 'pack' could lead to an increased desire to remain within sight and sound of the new family.

Summary of Canine Cases

- The most frequently referred behaviour problems in 2002 were aggression towards people, aggression towards dogs and separation problems.
- The most frequently referred breeds were mongrels, Border Collies and German Shepherds.
- Females show a higher incidence of separation problems than males, especially when they come from a rescue environment.
- Vocalisation is the most common expression of separation anxiety in both sexes.

Breakdown of Feline cases

In 2002 the most frequently referred feline problems were related to toileting indoors, amounting to 29% of the total problems seen, as is shown in Figure 7. This includes

breakdowns in house-training and a lack of initial training. Indoor marking was the second most common problem at 22% of problems seen, and this includes spraying, middening and scratching. Aggression towards other cats, both inside and outside the home made up 20% of problems referred, while aggression towards people was 12% of the caseload. This included predatory and fear-based aggression as well as food-guarding, biting during handling, learned aggression and any of the motivations listed but redirected onto a person or other animal.

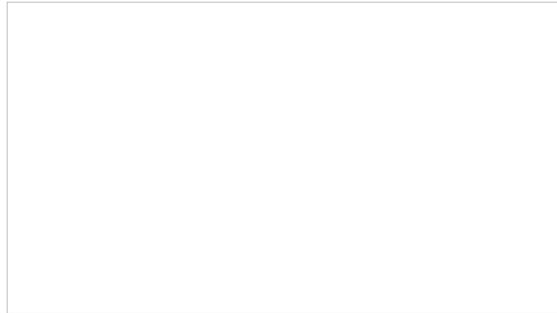


Figure 7. Breakdown of feline problems diagnosed in 2002.

Key: HT = house training problems; IM = indoor marking; AC = aggression towards cats; AP = aggression towards people; FP = Fears and phobias; O = other

Fears and phobias, which made up 10% of the cases seen, included those triggered by both visual and auditory stimuli, between which the cases were equally divided. The category 'Other' consisted of problems not separately classified and included cases of over-grooming, vocalisation during the night, frustration due to being confined, and timidity.

Since the behaviours illustrated in Figure 7 are categories that may contain several different individual behaviours, these have been analysed separately and are illustrated in Figure 8. The frequency of the problems seen in 2002 differed between the sexes. In females inappropriate toileting was seen in 31% of cases. This is usually either urination or defecation inside the house but not in a litter tray. The incidence of this in males was also quite high at 24 %, but the most commonly seen problem in male cats was spraying. Both sexes engage in this form of scent marking, but females this year were apparently less likely to do it in a situation that caused a problem for the owner.

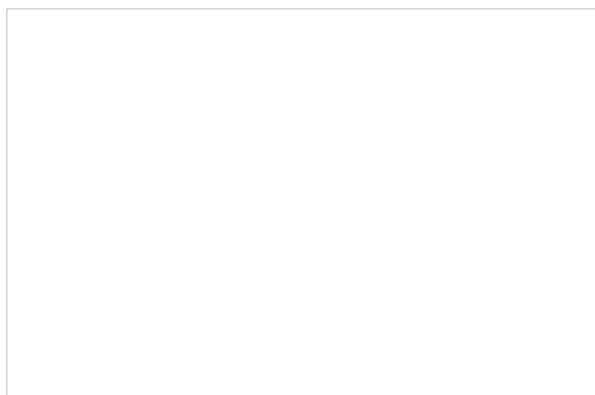


Figure 8. Breakdown of the most common problems seen in male and female cats as a percentage of all problems seen.

Key: IT = inappropriate toileting; S = spraying; SA = social aggression; VP = visual phobia; SP = sound phobia; O = problems not separately classified; LA = learned aggression; PA = predatory aggression

Social aggression towards other cats within the home, made up 17% of cases in males and 21% in females. Social aggression is often the result of owners bringing a new cat to a house containing one or more established cats, without appropriate introduction procedures. Although feral cats will live in large social groups where food is not limited, the groups frequently consist of related females and neutered males that may also be related. It has been observed that members of such groups may show aggression to outsider cats entering the area. Introducing an unfamiliar cat or one that is not recognised to a household can trigger aggression towards the newcomer, or occasionally from the new cat to one or more of the existing individuals.

It is interesting to note that aggression between canines within the home was also more prevalent in females than in males, although in recording canine data the sex of the victim was also specified which was not the case with the feline data. However, it is possible that the drive to defend resources for the production of hypothetical offspring is the reason for the higher rate of intra-specific aggression in the females of both species.

In comparison to these three types of behaviour, the other problems recorded occur relatively infrequently. Problems not separately classified include such behaviours as over-grooming, vocalising during the night, and made up 4% and 7% for males and females respectively. Phobias about visual and auditory stimuli, learned and predatory aggression towards people each made up 6% or less of the total problems seen.

Comparison with previous years

Data for inclusion in the Annual Review have not always been classified in the same way, so direct comparisons are not always possible, but since 1994 indoor marking or spraying have always been in the three most frequently seen behaviours. Aggression towards other cats has been included in the top three since 1997, and toileting problems in the four most common problems since 1996. Figure 9 shows the trends in behaviours referred since 1996.

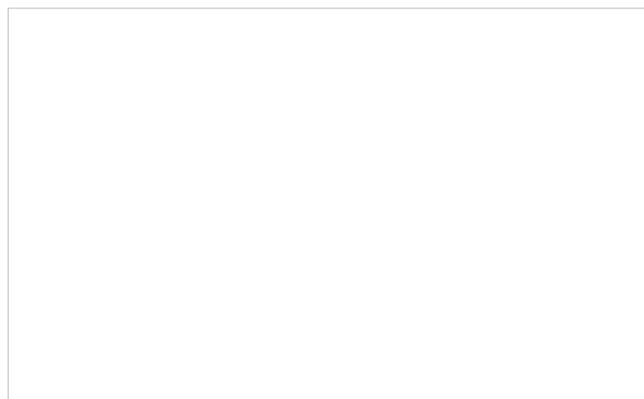


Figure 9. Trends in behaviour problems referred since 1996.

Key: IM = indoor marking; AP = aggression towards people; AC = aggression towards cats; HT = house training problems;

There is little discernible pattern in the data for the four most common problems diagnosed since 1996, except that indoor marking declined from its highest in 1996 to a low of 20% in 1999, and has increased steadily since that point. The fact that it was so high in 1996 is likely to be due to the perception of vets and clients at that time as to which problems were susceptible to treatment by a behaviour counsellor. House training problems have also begun to increase again since a similar low point in 1999, and have occurred at a similar level to referrals for indoor marking since that time.

Summary of Feline Cases

- The most frequently referred feline problems in 2002 were house training, indoor marking, aggression towards other cats and aggression towards people.
- Inappropriate toileting behaviour was more often seen in females, while males were most commonly referred for spraying indoors.
- Social aggression towards cats in the home was seen more frequently in females than males.
- Fear of sound and of visual stimuli were also more prevalent in females than males.
- There is no consistent trend in the numbers of the most common types of problems seen over the past eight years.