

Accepted Manuscript

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R. Col, C. Day, C.J.C. Phillips

PII: S1558-7878(16)30061-2

DOI: [10.1016/j.jveb.2016.07.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jveb.2016.07.001)

Reference: JVEB 981

To appear in: *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*

Received Date: 27 April 2016

Accepted Date: 18 July 2016

Please cite this article as: Col, R., Day, C., Phillips, C.J.C., An epidemiological analysis of dog behavior problems presented to an Australian behavior clinic, with associated risk factors, *Journal of Veterinary Behavior* (2016), doi: 10.1016/j.jveb.2016.07.001.

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An epidemiological analysis of dog behavior problems presented to an Australian behavior clinic, with associated risk factors

R. Col^{1,2}, C. Day^{1,3} and C.J.C. Phillips^{1*},

¹ School of Veterinary Science, University of Queensland, Gatton, Queensland 4343, Australia

² Department of Physiology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Selcuk University, Konya, Turkey

³ Pethealth, Fairfield, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

*Author to whom correspondence should be addressed; E-Mail: c.phillips@uq.edu.au

Abstract

Records of dogs presented to a behavior clinic servicing the eastern seaboard of Australia in and around Brisbane and the Gold Coast were analysed for principal behavior problems and the related factors, from information recorded at the time that the owner approached the clinic for assistance. Data relating to 7,858 dogs presenting with 11,521 behavior problems between 2001 and 2013 were analysed. Twenty-two principal behavior problems were identified, of which the most common, in declining order, were aggression towards people, barking and anxious behavior. Male dogs were at greater risk of several behavior problems, compared to female dogs. Low socioeconomic status of owners and a short period spent at home each week were also associated with a greater risk of several behavior problems. The prevalence of breeds and breed groups presented to the clinic were compared with dog registrations at the local city council, and there were more working dogs, hounds and utility dogs and fewer terriers, toy dogs and non-sporting dogs in the clinic population. Uncommon breeds were over-represented in the clinic population compared to local registrations. The risk of developing behavior problems is discussed in the light of evidence about the dogs and their owners.

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