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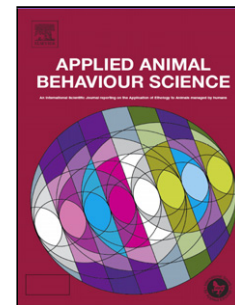
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The effects of audiobooks on the behaviour of dogs at a rehoming kennels.

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Abstract

Domestic dogs are often kept in kennelled environments. These may be stressful, and impact negatively upon welfare, due to unpredictable variations in space, social interaction and noise. Auditory stimulation such as music has been demonstrated to enhance animal welfare in a range of species, however despite suggested benefits in humans the potential of audiobooks as auditory enrichment for animals has not been investigated. The present study aimed to investigate the effects of audiobooks upon the behaviour of 31 dogs housed in a rescue shelter. The dogs were exposed to five auditory conditions (audiobook, classical music, pop music, psychoacoustically designed dog music and no auditory control) for 2 hours with an intervening period of 2 days between conditions. The dogs' behaviour were recorded every 5 minutes throughout the 2 hour auditory conditions using instantaneous scan-sampling. The findings from the present study indicate that exposure to audiobooks significantly influences the behaviour of kennelled dogs. Audiobooks resulted in dogs spending more of their time resting than when exposed to any of the other auditory conditions (Control: $Z = -4.807$, $P < 0.001$; Pop: $Z = -4.791$, $P < 0.001$; Classical: $Z = -4.732$, $P < 0.001$; Psychoacoustically designed dog music: $Z = -3.911$, $P < 0.001$). Dogs also spent less time displaying sitting or standing vigilant behaviour when the audiobook was played compared to all other conditions (Control: $Z = -4.579$, $P < 0.001$; Pop: $Z = -4.504$, $P < 0.001$; Classical: $Z = -3.450$, $P = 0.001$; Psychoacoustically designed dog music: $Z = -3.514$, $P < 0.001$). This study suggests that exposure to audiobooks can enhance the welfare of kennelled dogs due to their calming influence on dog behaviour. Use of audiobooks provides a simple yet practical tool that can be readily used in many kennel environments to enhance dog welfare and potentially increase the likelihood of successful rehoming of dogs.

Keywords

Audiobooks, Auditory stimulation, Animal Welfare, Dogs, Environmental enrichment.

1. Introduction

Audiobooks increase resting behaviour in kennelled dogs.

Audiobooks decrease sitting/standing behaviour in kennelled dogs.

Audiobooks have potential as auditory enrichment for kennelled dogs.

Domestic dogs are kept in kennel environments for a range of reasons with rescue, boarding, quarantine and laboratory kennels being commonplace (Hubrecht, 1995; Taylor and Mills, 2007). Kennels are often stressful environments due to the associated spatial and social restrictions (Beerda et al., 1999a; Hiby et al., 2006; Taylor and Mills, 2007). Limited social interactions, restricted space, high noise levels and lack of control occurring within kennels are all potential sources of stress for dogs (Hubrecht and Turner, 1998; Sales et al., 1997; Taylor and Mills, 2007). Continued exposure to these factors can result in chronic stress and compromised welfare (Beerda et al., 1999ab; Beerda et al., 2000). They can also lead to

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