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Evaluation of a canine and feline behavioural welfare assessment tool for use in companion animal veterinary practice

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Highlights

- Veterinary care impacts canine and feline behavioural welfare
- A tool to assess behavioural welfare practices was developed for veterinary clinics
- Interviews had higher reliability and feasibility than appointment observations
- Interview responses were inconsistent with observations, indicating low validity
- A mixed method approach is needed to maximize reliability, feasibility and validity

Abstract

Veterinary care can both positively and negatively impact animal welfare in terms of behavioural welfare. This occurs both in the veterinary clinic through interactions with patients and management of their stress, fear and aggression, and in the animal's home through the provision of behaviour and training advice for behavioural management as a whole. An animal welfare assessment scheme, incorporating management-, resource- and animal-based measures of animal welfare through interviews and appointment observations, was developed to assess practices related to behavioural welfare in small animal veterinary clinics. It was tested for reliability, validity, and feasibility in 30 companion and mixed animal veterinary clinics, and information concerning current behavioural welfare practices was also collected. Based on weighted kappa statistics, inter-observer reliability showed almost perfect agreement

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