

CHARACTERIZATION OF DOG AND CAT SURPLUS IN USA : AN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL APPROACH

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Des données précises sont nécessaires pour mieux caractériser le surplus d'animaux de compagnie aux USA. Le problème de la destruction d'animaux reste posé malgré des tentatives dans le passé pour définir et résoudre ce problème. Différents groupes ont essayé de résoudre ce problème, mais ils n'ont pas suffisamment concentré leurs efforts sur l'évaluation adéquate de la réussite des programmes mis en œuvre. Plusieurs études du National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy ont été initiées ces trois dernières années. Cette étude doit aider à répondre aux questions « Quelles sont les caractéristiques des animaux abandonnés à un refuge ? » et « Quelles sont les caractéristiques des propriétaires de ces animaux ? ». Des questionnaires d'enquête ont été utilisés dans 12 refuges des USA. Les questions portaient sur les propriétaires d'animaux, la démographie et les abandons d'animaux dans l'établissement. Les raisons des abandons ont été collectées à l'aide de 71 codages différents. Cinq raisons maximum, non hiérarchisées, étaient reportées. Les raisons majeures d'abandons communes aux deux espèces étaient le déménagement, le refus des animaux par les propriétaires fonciers, la présence excessive d'animaux dans la maison, le coût pour l'entretien des animaux, la présence de problèmes personnels et un logement trop petit. Plus de femelles sont abandonnées que les mâles avec 49% d'animaux entiers et 41% castrés ou ovariectomisés. Les races croisées représentent 80% de tous les animaux. Tous les questionnaires ont été remplis par des volontaires. Les femmes ont répondu plus souvent que les hommes et la majorité des personnes enquêtées avaient 25 ans ou moins. A l'aide d'analyses et de données complémentaires, un modèle de ces animaux et des propriétaires sera développé. Des facilités pour conserver les animaux pourront s'appuyer sur l'utilisation de modèles afin de modéliser et de sélectionner des mesures d'intervention appropriées.

INTRODUCTION

Accurate data are needed to further characterize the pet surplus in the USA. The problem of pet destruction continues, in spite of past attempts to define and solve the problem. Different groups have attempted to solve the problem, but have not synthesized their efforts to adequately evaluate the success of implemented programs. The National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy (NCPSP) was created three years ago to coordinate epidemiological studies to: 1) Characterize the human population relinquishing animals to shelters; 2) Characterize pets (dogs and cats) that are surrendered to US shelters; 3) Estimate the number of dogs and cats that are relinquished nationally to US animal shelters and their sources of disposition; 4) Characterize acquisition, ownership and relinquishment of dogs and cats through a national household survey. Several national studies in the USA have been initiated during the last three years. This presentation will focus on one study designed to determine and quantify the human and animal factors that may influence relinquishing of animals to pet holding facilities. This study will help answer the questions of "What are the characteristics of pets surrendered to shelters?" and "What are the characteristics of people surrendered animals to a shelter?".

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study involved a personal interview of pet owners who relinquished their animals (dogs and cats) at the animal shelter. Trained interviewers used a 66 item questionnaire that included questions related to the pet owner, the pet relinquished and demographics of the household. Twelve shelters in the USA were studied. They were located in Sacramento county, California (3), the front range of Colorado (3), Knoxville, Tennessee (2), Louisville, Kentucky (2), Bergen County, New Jersey (1), and New York City (1). Reasons for relinquishment were reported using 71 codes. A maximum of five reasons without ranking was recorded. Interviews were held in the shelters over a twelve month period on rotating days. All interviews were voluntary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interviews with 3414 people were conducted over the length of the study. Of these, 51% were 25 years of age or younger. Women represented 53% of those interviewed. A total of 2096, 1319 dogs and cats respectively were included in the study. There were 3041 individual relinquished animals, 280 relinquished litters and 94 litters with mothers were relinquished. The top reasons for relinquishment common to both species were moving, landlord will not allow pet, too many animals in household, cost of pet maintenance, owner has personal problems and home/yard are too small. For cats, allergies in family, can't find homes for litter, house soiling and owner no longer wants responsibility complete the top ten reasons stated. For dogs, owner has no time for pet, bites, aggressive to people and escapes confinement completed the top ten. Of animals relinquished

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individually, 53% were female. Upon relinquishment 41% of individual animals had been spayed or neutered, 49% had not and 10% were unknown. Mixed breed animals accounted for 80%, purebreds for 17% and unknown breed status was reported at 3%.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the data is continuing. With the information gathered in these interviews and from a national household survey, accurate profiles of the pet owner who surrenders an animal to a shelter and of the animal surrendered will be developed. The information will assist pet holding facilities in selecting appropriate intervention measures.

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