

HEALTH CARE AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF PURE BRED DOGS IN PUDUCHERRY

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A study was carried out to assess the health care and management practices of pure - bred dog owners in Puducherry region of the UT of Puducherry. One hundred fifty dog owners were selected as respondents who owned 164 dogs of different breeds. Majority of the dogs were rarely taken to the veterinarian for regular health checkup but were dewormed and vaccinated regularly. Regular exercise and grooming were not provided to majority of the dogs. Around 48% of the dogs had a good Health Condition Score of 3. Majority of the dogs did not have a separate kennel constructed for them and were left free all the time. None of the dogs in the study were trained professionally, but had the basic training of house breaking.

Keywords: Deworming, Health care, Pet dogs, Vaccination.

Total commitment is required to maintain optimal health of the dog and also a commitment for selecting an appropriate companion dog and raising it in a fashion that reduces the probability of undesirable aggressive responses (Hart and Hart, 1997). Owners should keep only the type and number of pets for which they can provide appropriate food, water, shelter, health care and companionship. Thus, a breed of dog should be chosen that suits the home and lifestyle of the dog owner. Rearing of dogs involves awareness and adoption of various practices among the dog owners. Selection, training, feeding, grooming, vaccination, deworming, housing and breeding are some of the key areas in which the dog owners need to have adequate knowledge to ensure welfare of the dog in the family.

Many societies derive benefits from their associations with dogs. All dogs should be vaccinated against infectious diseases at the proper time depending on the disease and the owner is required to keep proper vaccination records. Regular vaccination will help to prevent the commonly occurring infectious diseases (Sreekumar and Ninan, 2016). Vaccination of dog is found to be a

routine practice in Nagpur (Sawaimul *et al.*, 2009a). The mortality rate mainly due to diseases was 10.6 per cent. (Antonio *et al.*, 2007).

Bunting (1980) suggested that grooming should be a part of daily care and if daily grooming is not possible, brushing and combing at least a week is essential. Dog should be bathed only when they become extremely dirty. Grooming should be regularly practiced in dogs which include brushing and cleaning of the hair coat, maintenance of healthy skin, cleaning the eyes, ears and teeth and trimming of the nails. Daily brushing is recommended in all dogs to remove dead hair, to distribute skin oil and to improve cutaneous circulation. In addition to regular combing and brushing long haired breeds need to be checked for matted hairs (Sreekumar and Ninan, 2016).

Housing is an important aspect of dog management, as improper housing will lead to many problems in the dogs housed. Proper housing provided proper control and personal environment to the dog, safe and secure holding place and protected the dog from inclement weather conditions. (Sreekumar and Ninan, 2016). In Nagpur, most of the owners (54 per cent) housed the dog inside their homes.

Part of M.V.Sc. Thesis

In India, kennel floors are usually made of concrete and the minimum sleeping space recommended for small, medium and large breeds are not less than 10, 20 and 22 sq. ft, respectively. The minimum dimensions of the kennel should be the square of the dog's length plus 6 inches and kennel height should be 6 inches taller than the height of the dog. These dimensions represent clearly the minimum space to allow a dog to turn around (Chakrabarti, 1986).

Materials and Methods

A study was undertaken in May 2016 in Puducherry region of the Union Territory of Puducherry wherein, a total of 150 dogs who owned 164 dogs were selected for this study. Primary data for the study was collected personally by the investigator through interview schedule and observation made at the owner's premises. The health condition score was derived with the indicators as activeness of the dog, smooth and shiny hair coat, free of ectoparasites, free from disease, no abnormal discharges from ears or eyes and carriage and cleanliness of teeth.

Results and Discussion

All the dogs studied were apparently healthy and active without any deformities at the time of study. More than one-half (55.48 per cent) of the dogs were rarely taken for regular health check up, 34.15 per cent of the dogs had health checkup once in 6 months and 10.37 per cent had a check up once in a fortnight. Of the 164 dogs, all the dogs have been given the first shot of Antirabies and Multi antigen vaccination (Canine Distemper, Hepatitis, Parvo, Parainfluenza and Leptospira). Regular deworming alone was practiced for nearly one-half (30.49 per cent) of the dogs, regular vaccination alone was done for 49.39 per cent of dogs and regular vaccination and deworming was done for 18.29 per cent. The proportion of dog owners who were not practicing vaccination and deworming for their dogs was very meager (1.83 per cent). This revealed that majority of

the dog owners had sufficient knowledge about vaccination and deworming.

One-half (50.61 per cent) of the dogs were rarely exercised followed by nearly one-third (32.93 per cent) of the dogs given exercise every day and almost one-fifth (16.46 per cent) of the dogs given exercise thrice a week. Exercise was mainly in the form of walk.

For nearly two-third (56.09 per cent) of the dogs, no grooming practices were done. Brushing of hair coat was done for nearly one fifth (29.88 per cent) of the dogs. Ear cleaning was done for 16.46 per cent of the dogs, dental care was practiced for 11.59 per cent of the dogs and nail trimming was done for 7.32 per cent of the dogs. Nearly one-half (51.22 per cent) of the dogs were bathed once in a week followed by nearly one-third (31.1 per cent) of dogs given bath once in 15 days and 17.68 per cent of the dogs were given bath once in a month. Of the 164 dogs, majority (89.63 per cent) were not administered any oral coat conditioners, whereas 10.37 per cent of dogs were given oral coat conditioners.

Majority of the dogs (84.75 per cent) were left free always. Separate kennel was provided to only 6.71 per cent of the dogs (Table 1). Less than one-tenth (6.1 per cent) of the dogs were left free for some time and tied for some time. Only a meager (2.44 per cent) of the dogs were tied always due to the aggressive behaviour of the dogs or the presence of children at home. Of the 164 dogs, housing was provided for eleven dogs by the owners. The average height, length and width of the kennel were 7.12, 7.02 and 3.91 feet, respectively (Table 1). Adequate lighting and sanitation provisions were made in the kennels. It could be noticed that for the eleven dogs, adequate space was provided by the dog owners.

None of the dogs in Puducherry region were provided with professional training. However, all the dogs had informal training, wherein they responded to their master/owner's verbal commands. More than two-third of the dogs responded to commands

like “come” followed by “sit” and “stop” in both, English and regional language.

Nearly one-half of the dogs (48.17 per cent) had a health condition score of 3 (good) followed by one-fifth (21.95 per cent) of the dogs with a score of 2 (fair), almost one-fifth (18.9 per cent) of dogs with the score 4 (very

good) and nearly one-tenth (10.98 per cent) of the dogs with the score 5 (excellent). None of the dogs had the score 1 (poor). It could be inferred that all the dogs were maintained in an optimum health condition by their dog owners.

Table: 1. Management practices

n = 164

Sl. No.	Item	Categories	No. of dogs	Percentage
1	Regular health check up	Once in 6 months	56	34.15
		Fortnightly	17	10.37
		Rarely	91	55.48
2	Regular vaccination and deworming	Regular deworming	50	30.49
		Regular vaccination	81	49.39
		Regular deworming And vaccination	30	18.29
		None	03	01.83
3	Exercise	Everyday	54	32.93
		Thrice a week	27	16.46
		Rarely	83	50.61
4	Grooming practices *	Brushing of hair coat	49	29.88
		Ear cleaning	27	16.46
		Dental care	19	11.59
		Nail Trimming	12	07.32
		None	92	56.09
5	Bath	Once in a week	84	51.22
		Once in 15 days	51	31.10
		Once in a month	29	17.68
6	Oral coat conditioners	Given	17	10.37
		Not given	147	89.63
7	Housing	Separate kennel	11	06.71
		Left free (always)	139	84.75
		Tied (always)	04	02.44
		Left free + tied	10	06.10

**Multiple responses*

Table: 2. Health Condition Score

n = 164

Sl. No.	Score	Condition	Frequency	Percentage
1	1	Poor	0	0.00
2	2	Fair	36	21.95
3	3	Good	79	48.17
4	4	Very good	31	18.90

5	5	Excellent	18	10.98
Total			164	100.0

Conclusions

Majority of the dogs were rarely taken to the veterinarian for regular health checkup. But dewormed and vaccinated regularly. Regular exercise and grooming was not provided to majority of the dogs. Around 48% of the dogs had a good Health Condition Score of 3. Majority of the dogs did not have a separate kennel constructed for them and were left free all the time, whereas, a few dogs were tied for some time. None of the dogs in Puducherry region were provided with professional training. However, all the dogs had informal training, wherein they responded to their master/owner's verbal commands.

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