Shelter Dog Behavior Improvement: Dog Walking As Enrichment

Rebecca Johnson, PhD, RN, FAAN, Millsap Professor of Gerontological Nursing, MU Sinclair School of Nursing;
Director Research Center for Human-Animal Interaction, MU College of Veterinary Medicine
Charlotte McKenney, RN, BSN, Assistant Director Research Center for Human-Animal Interaction
Sandra McCune, VN, BA, PhD, Research Manager,
Human-Companion Animal Bond Research Programme, Waltham Centre for Pet Nutrition

Introduction & General Aims

5-9 million shelter animals euthanized every year

Most programs are aimed at reducing the numbers of animals relinquished to shelters

This study aims to improve adoptability of shelter dogs through an enrichment activity of walking with older adults

Hypothesis

Dogs residing at the animal shelter of a mid-sized mid-western city that participate in a walking program will have:

Improved behavior

Increased adoption rates

Decreased euthanasia rates

Materials & Methods

All dogs passed a basic behavior test qualifying them to walk

Dogs matched with control on size (small, medium, large)

Experimental Group walked 5 days a week for 30-60 minutes with elderly adult

Control Group did not walk

Dogs matched with elderly adult for walking capability, speed

Behaviors assessed and a behavior score assigned daily

Days to adoption, to foster or euthanasia was recorded

Researchers collecting dog behavior data.

Participants walking in the daily enrichment program.

Project was made possible by:

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Demographic Description

Size category	Small	Medium	Large
N=84 pairs	38 pairs	25 pairs	21 pairs

Dog Outcomes

Variable	Experimental	Control	p-value
In Program	6	10	0.2931
Adopted	58	26	<0.0001
To Foster	13	28	0.0071
Euthanized	7	20	0.0063

Dog Behavior Scores

	Mean	Range	
Experimental	24.1	8.0-35	
Control	20.3	11-34	p<.0001

Conclusions

The dog walking program was effective in improving behavior and adoption rates and decreasing euthanasia rates.