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Assessing undesired aggression in military working dogs

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Abstract

The present study assesses the reactions of military working dogs (MWDs) to potential aggression-inducing stimuli. A standardized aggression test was conducted on the dogs ($n = 31$) and their behaviour was recorded on videotape and subsequently analyzed. The results of the test were compared with those from a questionnaire filled out by the handler prior to the test.

Most dogs (83.87%) showed at least one act characteristic of aggressive behaviour during the test. In 69.35% of the cases, the dog's posture was lower than neutral. The results of this study showed that the dogs reacted to this test with fear-related aggression, as dogs exhibiting aggressive biting behaviour express a lower posture than dogs exhibiting either threatening or non-aggressive biting behaviour ($F_{3,48} = 10.71$, $p < 0.001$).

The results of the questionnaire showed that these patrol dogs have an important

impact on the social and private life of the handlers. All dogs in this sample, which live at the handler's home, come into contact with family members including children, unknown persons and other dogs.

Fearfulness has been cited as the most common reason for rejecting potential working dogs [Goddard, M.E., Beilharz, R.G., 1984. A factor analysis of fearfulness in potential guide dogs. *Appl. Anim. Behav. Sci.* 12, 253–265]. Therefore, in light of the important inter-specific interactions exhibited by these working dogs, measures are proposed to prevent and mitigate this undesirable temperamental trait. Further studies must be conducted to identify aggression-specific stimuli.



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Keywords

Working dogs; Behavioural test; Fear-related aggressive behaviour

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