



Factors affecting time to adoption of dogs rehomed by a UK welfare charity



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Summary

Breed, purebred status, size, sex, neuter status on arrival, age, coat colour, veterinary treatment and rehoming centre all affect the time to adoption of dogs rehomed by Dogs Trust.

Dogs spent 28 days (95% CI 28 – 29) in kennels before being rehomed.

Temperament could be an important factor but had to be excluded from multivariable model.

Dogs from gundog and utility breed groups and purebred dogs were rehomed at fastest rate.



Introduction

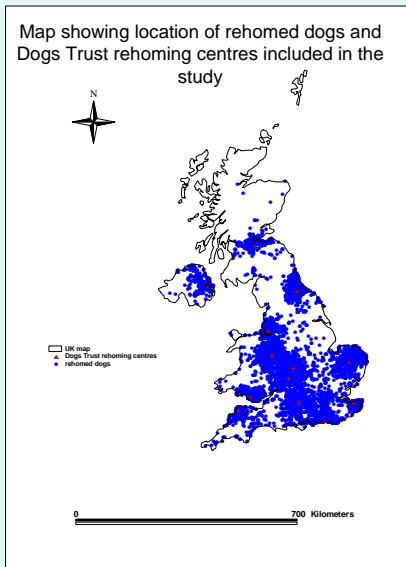
There are 6.1 million dogs in the UK.

Dogs Trust is the largest UK dog welfare charity.

There were 106 000 strays in 2004 costing the government £35 million.

Of all the strays in the UK 9% were euthanased in 2004.

A study in Australia estimated the average time spent in kennels was 5.7 days, while in USA it was between 11 and 13 days.



Objective

To determine the factors which affect the time it takes for a dog to be adopted.

Methods

A retrospective cohort study was conducted using 13338 records.

A missing value analysis was done using SPSS V13 and 3 variables were excluded.

All statistical analysis was done using Stata V 9.

Kaplan Meier plots, univariate Cox regression and median survival times were calculated for each variable.

The proportional hazards assumption for all variables was assessed using Schoenfeld's residuals.

A multivariable Cox regression model was developed using a forward stepwise variable selection procedure, a frailty model was used to account for correlation within the dataset.

All variables which violated the proportional hazards assumption were treated as time varying covariates.

Results and discussion

The median time till adoption of all dogs in the study was 28 days (95% CI 28-29). This was much longer in this study because of a non-euthanasia policy as compared to the studies carried out in Australia and the USA.

A study in the USA found that toy and terriers were more likely to be rehomed while utility breeds were least likely to be rehomed while this study found that utility and gundog breed groups were rehomed at the fastest rate.

Similar results to other studies in that purebred dogs were rehomed at a faster rate than cross-bred dogs.

Large sized dogs were rehomed at a slower rate than smaller dogs - most likely due to the costs, space requirements and perceived exercise requirements.

Female dogs were rehomed at a faster rate, previous studies have shown that people think that males dogs are more likely to have behavioural problems.

Whether a dog had a docked tail or not had no effect on the rate of rehoming.

Acknowledgements

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Kaplan-Meier plot of time to adoption for different breed groups

