

ASSESSMENT OF BREED DIFFERENCES IN GERMAN SHEPHERD & BELGIAN MALINOIS DOGS' REACTIVITY: A PILOT STUDY



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INTRODUCTION

The effect of dog domestication process and selection choices is displayed by the hundreds of dog breeds nowadays worldwide recognized. German Shepherd (GS) and Belgian Malinois (BM) are worldwide known utility breeds for military purposes. The social importance and functions of drugs detection dogs are well known. Considering the effectiveness of the work of these dogs and the long period required for drug detection training.

AIM

To investigate breed-characteristic reactivity in GS and BM (N= 5+5) to identify powerful tools for early attitude evaluation for breed choice.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A basic point was the standardization of environment, diet, management and handling for all the scored dogs, a very difficult condition to obtain in family or kennel dogs. Dogs behaviour was evaluated one month before training sessions started. Behaviour was scored according to a modified standardized working test for sheepdog established to evaluate natural dog attitudes. Dogs' reactions to tests were scored from 0: over reactive/fearful/aggressive to 3: sociable/curious/playful. The test included 11 situations: new environment (A), handling by a stranger (B), dog at leash (C), dog-handler interaction (D), dog-foreign people group interaction (E), visual stimulations and space limitation (F), acoustic stimulation (G), dog-stranger playful interaction (with handler) (H), dog-stranger playful interaction (without handler) (I); handler's call (K), dog-dog interaction (L). The data were analyzed by a non parametric Kruskal-Wallis one way ANOVA (SAS[®], 2006).

RESULTS

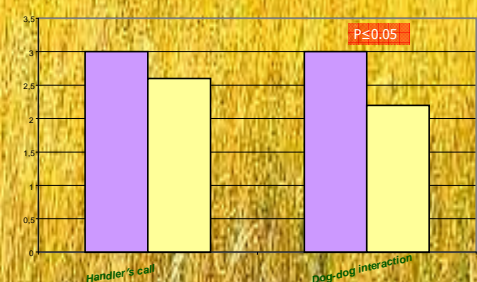
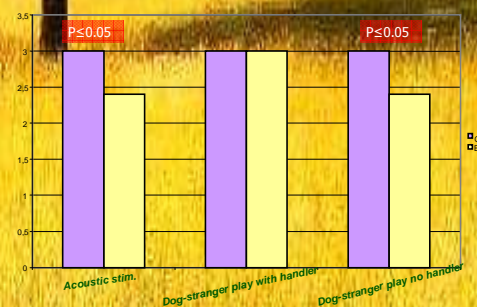
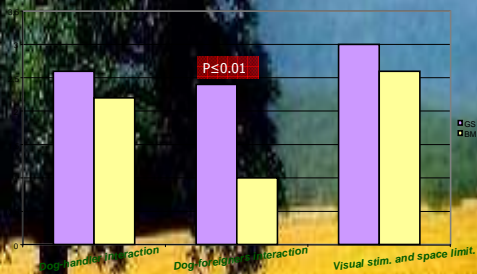
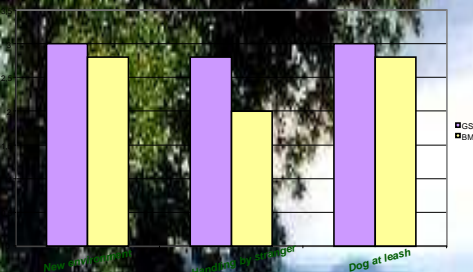
Statistically significant differences were found: GS obtained higher scores ($P \leq 0.01$; $P \leq 0.05$) in most situations. Higher scores for sociability and playfulness related traits were recorded in GS, as well as a lower level of fearfulness related traits.

CONCLUSION

The recorded traits may be a useful and objective tool in dog behaviour analysis. The applied test showed high ability in evaluating breed differences in reactivity. Breed reactivity differences have been demonstrated.



Behavioural reactions scores



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