

THE CADAVER DOG: PHENOTYPICAL ANALYSIS OF BEHAVIOUR

Marelli S.P., Riva J., Lazzari C., Longeri M., Polli M.

Università degli Studi di Milano, Facoltà di medicina Veterinaria, Dipartimento di Scienze Animali
– Zootecnica Veterinaria: via Celoria 10, 20133 Milano, Italia; e-mail address:

stefano.marelli@unimi.it

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Introduction:

The aim of the present research was to evaluate the behavioural patterns in working cadaver dogs.

Materials and methods:

7 specifically trained dogs (6 Labrador Retrievers; 1 Italian Wolfdog) for human remains search (HRS) activity were singularly video-recorded during 21 HRS tests in standardied conditions (3 sessions). 3 different odorous samples were used (decomposing teeth, decomposing soft-tissues, decomposing blood). Frequency(N) and lasting (s) of the scanned behaviours were calculated. Dog posture and handler behaviour were considered to verify handler dog interaction and response. An anamnestic-behavioural report was filled for each dog. SAS ® statistic package was applied to data analysis: MEAN and NPAR1WAY procedure were applied; the analysis of variance was carried out using a Kruscal-Wallis one-way ANOVA. Dogs sex and breed, Odorous sample, wind speed and direction and test order were considered sources of variance.

Results:

The obtained results list an objective sequence of naturally expressed quantitative behaviours during HRS activity. A strong influence of genetics on trained dogs was recorded, thus breed and sex showed the most significant effect on dogs HRS behaviours.

Discussion:

Objective studies of breed and sex specific behaviours in HRS, such as the preliminary one we are presenting, could improve training success and limit training costs and results variability. Furthermore the constant measurements of environmental and atmospheric variables should become a common practice before every HRS activity.

According to our results; the handlers could be able to modify through the comprehension of dog's behaviour a better way to carry on the HRS.

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