

Characteristics of cats submitted to behavioral examination: a retrospective study

Cannas S.^a, Casavecchia M.A.^a, Ferrante V.^b, Mazzola S.^a, Palestrini C.^a.

^aDipartimento di Medicina Veterinaria, Università degli Studi di Milano, Via Celoria 10, 20133, Milano, Italy

^bDipartimento di Scienze e Politiche Ambientali, Università degli Studi di Milano, Via Celoria 2, 20133, Milano, Italy

Simona.Cannas@unimi.it

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Keywords: cat's problem behaviours, inappropriate elimination, aggression, compulsive disorder

Veterinary practices are increasingly consulted about behaviour problems in cats¹. This study aimed at characterizing similarities and differences in features underlying different cats behavior problems.

207 cats were visited in the Behavioral Clinic of University of Milan between 1999-2017. Each cat underwent to a behavior consultation focused on all aspect of cat's behavior, management and health issue.

Of all of the cats involved, 51.2% had a diagnosis of inappropriate elimination, 15.9% of intraspecific and 14.9% of interspecific aggression, 8.5% of compulsive disorders and 9.5% other diagnosis (e.g. cognitive dysfunctions, inappropriate play, management problems). Cats with interspecific aggression were mostly male (76.6%), adopted before 60 days of age (56.7%) and stray (53.3%) ($p \leq 0.05$). Also about 50% of cats with compulsive disorders were stray, instead of cats with inappropriate elimination that were adopted mainly from another person (41%) ($p \leq 0.05$). No difference was found regarding the source of adoption in cats with intraspecific aggression. Owners of cats with interspecific aggression (36.7%) were significantly more inclined to surrender the cat to a cat rescue or to other people than were owners of cats with other problem behavior ($p \leq 0.05$).

Our work supports some previous findings^{2,3,4,5} and suggests some new information. A referral population is not likely representative of the entire population and to better understand patterns of behavioral problems, we need more complete population data and data from cats across their lifetime.

References

1. Heath, S. (2007). Behaviour problems and welfare. In: Rochlitz, I. (Ed.), *The Welfare of Cats*. Springer, Dordrecht, 91-118
2. Houpt, K.A. & Bamberger, M. (2006). Signalment factors, comorbidity, and trends in behavior diagnoses in cats: 736 cases (1991-2001). *JAVMA*, 229 (10), 1602-1606.
3. Palestrini, C., Berteselli, G., Cannas, S., Michelazzi, M. & Volontè, L. (2008). Focus on feline behavioural disorders. Part I: Inappropriate elimination and marking. *Veterinaria*, 22 (4), 21-26
4. Souza-Dantas, L.M., Soares, G.M., D'Almeida, J.M. & Paixao, R.L. (2009). Epidemiology of domestic cat behavioral and welfare issues: a survey of Brazilian referral animal hospitals in 2009. *Intern. J. Appl. Res. Vet. Med.*, 7 (3), 130-136
5. Wassink-van der Schot, A.A., Day, C., Morton, J.M., Rand, J. & Phillips, C.J.C. (2016). Risk factors for behavior problems in cats presented to an

Australian companion animal behavior clinic. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*,
14, 34-40