Oral presentations

Homeless pet owners – how does service provision impact on the human-animal bond?

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OBJECTIVES

Pet ownership has been shown to have many positive impacts on physical and mental health. Homeless people, some of the most vulnerable in society, commonly keep pets, which act as a source of support and companionship that they may struggle to find elsewhere. The aim of this research was to look into the distribution of homeless service providers accommodating homeless pet owners, evaluate their policies and their reasons for choosing whether or not to accommodate pets.

METHODS

A database of homeless accommodation service providers throughout England was assembled using information provided by the website Homeless Link (<http://www.homeless.org.uk/>). A survey was designed using Google Forms, piloted by several homelessness service providers and distributed via email with follow up reminder phone calls. Data were collated in Microsoft Excel and descriptive statistics compiled.

RESULTS

In total, 523 service providers were identified and emailed, of which 116 (22%) completed the survey. Almost 80% of service providers reported requests for accommodation by homeless pet owners. In contrast, only 36% actually accepted pets, with the main reason for refusing pets being health and safety implications, followed by hygiene.

STATEMENT

The results of this survey have shown that there is a demand for more pet-friendly homeless accommodation provision. Many homeless pet owners would rather remain in vulnerable or potentially dangerous situations than part with their pet. This study has identified potential barriers which could be addressed by altering perceptions and policies to allow more homeless owners to remain with their pets.

Investigation of serum C-reactive protein as a marker of inflammatory disease in cats

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OBJECTIVES

To compare serum C-reactive protein (CRP) concentrations between healthy cats and cats diagnosed with inflammatory diseases, and assess sensitivity and specificity of CRP for the diagnosis of inflammation in cats.

METHODS

Cats referred to the Queen's Veterinary School Hospital were identified retrospectively and classified into three groups (inflammatory, neoplastic, non-inflammatory) based on final diagnoses. Healthy cats were also recruited

prospectively as part of a FeLV/FIV screening programme. CRP was measured using an immunoturbidimetric assay. Serum CRP concentrations were compared between groups using the Mann Whitney U test and receiver-operator characteristic curves (ROC) constructed to evaluate sensitivity and specificity of CRP for diagnosis of inflammatory disease. The reference interval (RI) for CRP was calculated using the Box Cox transformed method. Data are presented as median [25th, 75th percentiles].

RESULTS

Serum CRP concentrations were greater in cats with inflammation (49 [42, 58] mg/L, n=54) than healthy cats (32 [25, 39] mg/L, n=39; P<0.001). Serum CRP concentrations were also higher in cats with neoplasia (53 [41, 66] mg/L, n=8) than healthy cats (P<0.001), however serum CRP concentrations were not significantly different between healthy cats and cats with non-inflammatory diseases (32 [25, 34] mg/L, n=18; P=0.45). The RI for CRP was 14–54 mg/L. Using a cut point of 54 mg/L, the sensitivity and specificity of CRP for diagnosis of inflammatory disease were 26.5% and 94.4% respectively.

STATEMENT

Serum CRP concentrations are increased in cats with inflammatory and neoplastic diseases, therefore CRP could be a useful tool for diagnosis of inflammatory disease in cats.

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