Beating bugs: a survey of biosecurity training in UK animal shelters

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INTRODUCTION

Annually, over 240,000 dogs and cats are cared for by UK animal rescue organisations where they may be exposed to an increased risk of infectious disease and high levels of physiological and psychological stress. Therefore, it is vital that high standards of biosecurity are maintained and that all staff and volunteers receive sufficient training. However, over 70% of shelter personnel are part-time volunteers with diverse levels of knowledge and experience.

The aim of this study was to gather baseline data on biosecurity training activities to inform future educational efforts and generate further research questions.

METHODS

An internet-based survey of 1527 e-mail contacts (from 1080 UK rescue organisations) was carried out between February and April 2013. The sampling frame was derived from a previously collated list of relevant organisations alongside e-mail addresses supplied by four national rescue charities. The survey covered topics such as animal numbers, veterinary relationships and staff and volunteer training in the area of disease management.

RESULTS

Valid responses were received from 211 respondents, a response rate of 13.8%. Sixty-one point two percent of respondents were from independent organisations with the remainder divided between centrally-funded branches of national charities (17.2%), self-funded branches (11.5%) and 'other' types of organisation (10.0%).

Sixty-nine point nine percent of respondents used a preferred private veterinary practice and, of those, 79.2% had received a visit from their vet on a normal working day. Veterinary advice was sought for immediate biosecurity issues (e.g. the health management of high risk animals, 77.5%) more frequently than for preventive strategies (e.g. cleaning and disinfection, 57.9%).

Biosecurity training was offered to 93.4% of staff members and 81.5% of volunteers. Permanent staff members were most likely to be trained by managers (43.6%) whereas volunteers were most likely to be trained by other animal care staff (42.2%). Time and the availability of information were considered important factors affecting the amount of training offered to both staff and volunteers.

Only 41.0% of independent organisations had written biosecurity protocols compared to 83.9% of centrally-funded branches. Survey respondents ranked vets and veterinary nurses, followed by the internet, as their preferred sources of information about infectious disease.

DISCUSSION

Animal shelters depend upon their veterinary relationships for accurate advice about biosecurity issues. There is room for further involvement of veterinary professionals in the management of infectious disease in the shelter environment.

MRI assessment of the effect of age on hippocampus height in dogs

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OBJECTIVE

To assess if the height of hippocampus (HH) is affected by ages in dogs.

METHODS

Magnetic resonance of dogs brain performed at DWR between May 2007 and September 2014 were reviewed; 134 studies, in which there was no macroscopic evidence of brain abnormalities, were included in the study. Dogs were divided in two groups: young (1 < age < 3 years) and old (age > 10 years). T2 FLAIR images were analysed using the same degree of image magnification (400%): the height of the brain (HB) and the height of the right and left hippocampus (RHH and LHH,

respectively) were measured on a single transverse image containing both the rostral colliculi and mesencephalic aqueduct. HH to brain ratio (HBr) was calculated as $(RHH/HB) \times 100$ and $(LHH/HB) \times 100$. A student t-test was used to compare LHH and RHH within the same age group and left and right HBr between young and old dog. $P < 0.05$ was considered as statistically significant; data were reported as mean (SD).

RESULTS

Of 134 enrolled cases, 84 were assigned to the young and 50 to the old group. RHH and LHH were 7.7 (1.1) mm and 7.7 (1.2) mm, respectively ($P < 0.001$); in the old group, RHH and LHH were 6.6 (1.1) mm and 6.6 (0.9) mm ($P < 0.001$). Right HBr was 17.1 (2.4)% and 14.7 (2.5)% in young and old group, respectively ($P < 0.001$); while, left HBr was 17.1 (2.6)% and 14.5 (2.3)% in young and old dog, respectively ($P < 0.001$).

CONCLUSION

In agreement with previous literature, our study demonstrated a statistically significant reduction in HH in older patients. However the overall difference in dimensions between young and old dogs was felt too small to be accurately interpreted, and is expected to fall within normal measurement errors.

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