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Awareness on pet dog management among Cynophiles in Tirupati

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Abstract

A study was carried out to identify the level of awareness and practices followed by pet dog owners in Tirupati city of Andhra Pradesh. The study design involved the systemic personal interview of randomly selected 180 dog owners using a structured interview schedule. Hence the respondents were surveyed by multistage random sampling procedure. The study revealed that about 72.22% pet owners were aware of heat detection and 80.56% were even aware of the appropriate period for breeding. About 83.88% of pet dog owners were aware of balanced feeding, 87.50% had been using commercial foods and 58.33% were aware of the chocolate toxicity. Among those who were aware of prophylactic measures, cent percent owners adopted the practice and dewormed and vaccinated their pet dogs regularly. Among the 150 owners who were aware of the proper place for taking their dog out for leisure, only 85 adapted the practice of taking dog out for exercise. Pet dog insurance was known to only 50 respondents however none of them got their pet dog insured.

Keywords: Pet dog, pet owner, tick channel, welfare, commercial food, deworming

Introduction

Animals that naturally live in groups with a hierarchical social structure are the greatest candidates for domestication (Mathialagan *et al.*, 2015) ^[5]. India is the nation with the fastest economic growth in the world, and as it adopts western lifestyles, there are more nuclear families, which ultimately lead to a rise in pet adoption. India's pet dog population has risen from 19.41 million in 2018 to 21.42 million in 2019 and is expected to reach 31.41 million in 2023 (Statista, 2022) ^[11]. Dogs were primarily domesticated by man and over time, there have been many changes in how dogs are being managed. The dog owners were happy to spend a relatively modest sum on the well-being and upkeep of their dogs. Pet owners give their dog's special attention and provide kennel amenities (Vijayakumar *et al.*, 2006) ^[13]. However, studies on pet dog care, the attachment between pets and owners, the awareness of pet lovers on scientific rearing of dogs and the challenges experienced by pet parents are rare. When it comes to caring for their animals, pet owners are getting more and more knowledgeable. As a result, they are seeking out veterinarians in greater numbers than ever and they anticipate becoming more personally involved in their pets' care and treatment (Sudarshan *et al.*, 2006) ^[12]. Due to convenience, the majority of pet dog owners who keep pets utilise non-scientific management techniques.

A thorough understanding of pet dog management practices adopted by pet owners will assist public health professionals in raising public awareness of zoonotic infections and their control. Hence, it is essential to create awareness among the pet owners on various scientific management practices followed to rear dogs (Sakshi *et al.*, 2017) ^[7]. In this context, a study was planned to interview the pet dog owners of Tirupati city with the aim of understanding the extent of awareness and adoption level regarding scientific pet dog breeding, feeding, housing, health care and welfare.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in College of Veterinary Science, Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University, Tirupati. A number of 180 respondents (pet dog owners) who visited the veterinary hospital of the college were selected by using simple random sampling method. A structured interview schedule was prepared after discussion and consultation with experts. Data was collected through the personal interview method and the gathered information was compiled, tabulated, and analysed by using standard statistical tools.

Results and Discussion

The results of the present study pertaining to awareness of breeding, feeding, housing, and health care management and welfare are depicted in figures 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively, while adoption of management practices is given in Table 1. The current study demonstrated that majority of the pet dog owners from Tirupati who were interviewed had awareness on breeding management of dogs. It was evident from the fig.1 that, about 72.22% pet owners were aware of heat detection and also, they practiced it in their pet dogs. Remaining 27.78% owners had no knowledge of heat detection. This could be due to the fact that these pet dog owners preferred

and reared male dogs than female dogs and these findings were similar to (Sakshi *et al.*, 2017) [7]. Also, Fig. 1 shows that 80.56% of dog owners were aware of the appropriate period for breeding, compared to the remaining 19.44% of dog owners who were unaware of the appropriate time for breeding. Of those who were aware of breeding time, 93.10% of the population had adopted the technique (Table.1). Majority of respondents were aware of the heat/oestrus signs in their dogs since they frequently sought guidance from veterinarians for managing dog breeding, and some of them had prior experience in breeding dogs.

Table 1: Extent of adoption of recommended pet dog management practices by pet dog owners of Tirupati

S. No	Particulars	Respondents, N =180		
		Adoption of activity (F)	%	
1	Breeding			
	a. Heat detection	130	72.22	
	b. Breeding time	135	75.00	
	c. Using high quality pedigree male dogs	50	27.78	
	d. Neuteringthe dogs	50	27.78	
2	Feeding			
	a. Balanced feeding of dogs	50	27.78	
	b. Use of commercial dog foods	140	77.78	
3	Housing			
	a. Provision of proper place for taking your dog out for leisure	85	47.22	
	b. Maintenance of kennel	15	8.33	
	c. Hygiene maintenance	150	83.33	
	d. Tick channel around the kennel	0	0.00	
4	Health care & welfare			
	a. Taking pet to Veterinary hospital/facility	180	100.0	
	b. Deworming	150	83.33	
	c. Vaccination	150	83.33	
	d. Basic trainings	10	5.56	
	e. Provision of exercise/activity	85	47.22	
	f. Grooming	150	83.33	
	g. Bathing	180	100.0	
	h. Insurance for pet dogs	0.0	0.00	

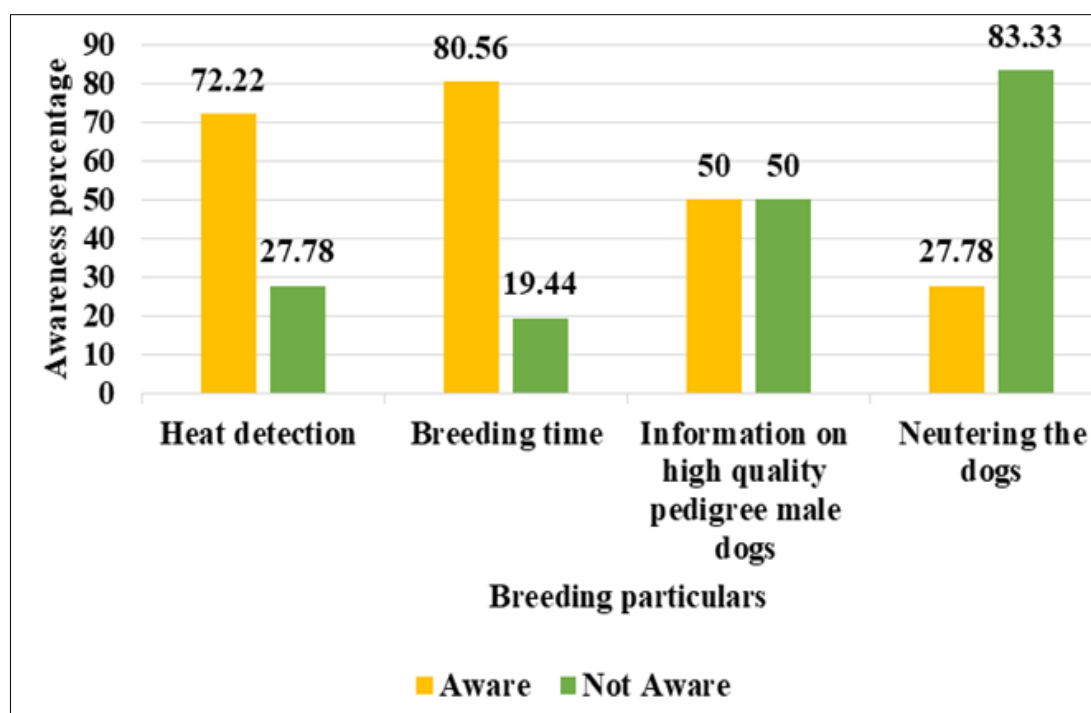


Fig 1: Percentage of awareness on breeding particulars

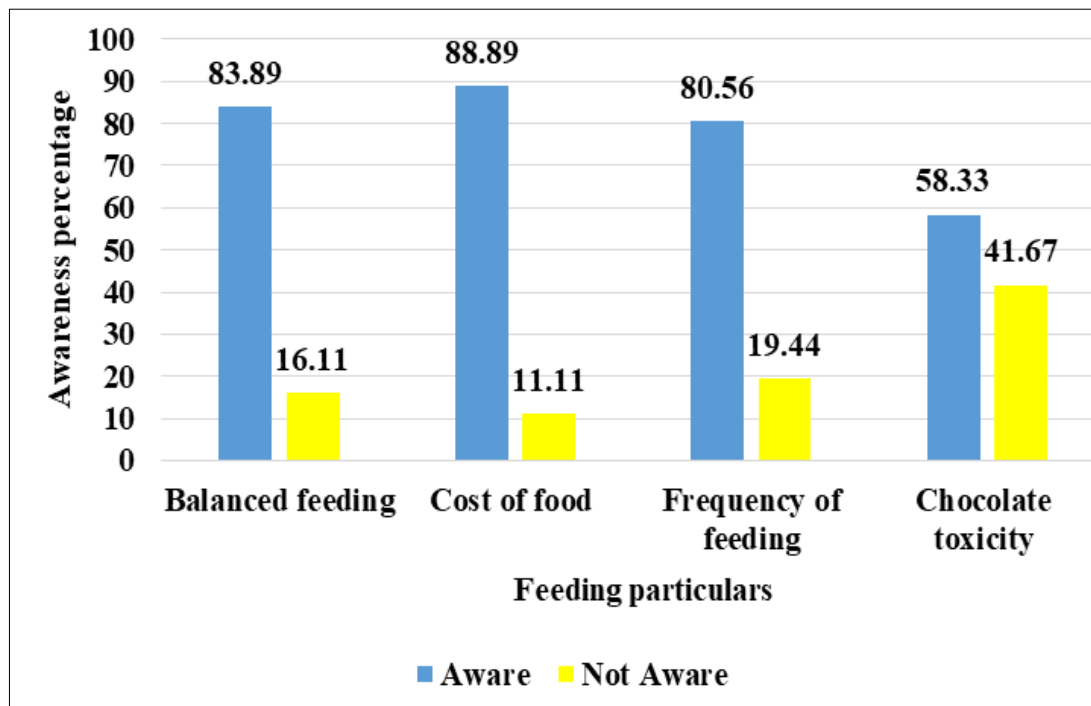


Fig 2: Percentage of awareness on feeding particulars

Further, it was observed that 50% of pet dog owners were aware of the information on high-quality purebred male dogs for natural service, while the remaining 25% were unaware and among those 90 pet dog owners who were aware of the high-quality purebred male dogs, only 50 respondents adopted the practice of using high-quality purebred male dogs (Table 1). Among 180 participants in the survey, 27.78% of the respondents neutered their dogs to reduce the danger of pregnancy, fights, and diseases of the reproductive organs, while 83.33% left their dogs intact for breeding in order to generate income from the sale of puppies. These findings were in accordance with the findings of Hsu *et al.* (2003) [3] who opined that, majority of the dogs were intact followed by neutered.

Owners of pet dogs must actively participate in choosing their animals' diet, and they are likely to be influenced by a variety of factors, such as their understanding of the nutritional requirements of their animals. The results of the current study (Fig 2) showed that the majority of pet dog owners of Tirupati were knowledgeable about dog feeding management. The study revealed that 83.88% of pet owners were aware of balanced feeding, while the remaining 16.11% owners being unaware. Also, data shows that 88.89% of dog owners were aware of the price of commercial dog food, compared to 11.11% of dog owners who are unaware of the price of commercial dog food. Table 1. Suggests that of those who were aware of commercial dog foods, 87.50% (140 respondents) had been using commercial foods. This indicates that pet owners were ready to spend money for commercial food and they belonged to affordable class. About 90% of pet dogs were fed commercial meals, according to a survey by Laflamme *et al.* (2008) [4] that included 637 dog owners in the United States and Australia. The study also reveals that non-commercial foods made up at least 25% of the diet for about 17.3% of dogs. Also at least once a week, 23.6% of dogs were offered raw meat or bones. Non-commercial feeders' sentiments were more favourable towards raw and home-prepared diets and expressed greater scepticism of commercial pet foods, food processing, and the pet food

industry. Similar findings were reported by Singh *et al.*, (2019) [10] in a study in Punjab. Seneviratne *et al.*, (2016) [9], reported that forty-two per cent of pet dogs in Sri Lanka were fed with homemade food only and 40 per cent of dogs were fed a mixture of both commercial and homemade food. Also from the present study, it was seen that 80.56% of dog owners were aware of the frequency of feeding dogs, while the remaining pet owners (19.44%) did not have knowledge of it. Further, it was studied that 58.33% of the pet dog owners were aware of the chocolate toxicity and 41.67% of the pet dog owners did not know about the chocolate toxicity (Fig 2). Majority of pet owners (69.44%) were aware of dog housing and its management (Fig 3). While few (30.56%) respondents did not have clarity on pet dog housing. From figure 3 it was also observed that 83.33% of dog owners knew the best areas to take their dogs on walk for exercise and fun, compared to 16.67% of dog owners who did not care for such activity. Among the 150 owners who were aware of the proper place for taking their dog out for leisure, only 85 adopted the practice of taking dog out for exercise (Table 1). Further, it was seen that 8.33% of the pet dog owners were aware of kennel maintenance and who were aware had adopted the technique. Hence majority of the pet owners kept the dog inside the home. As more dog owners keep their pets inside their homes, it is important to educate pet parents about zoonotic diseases and how to prevent them. Similar findings were observed by Athilakshmy *et al.*, (2020) [11] in Chennai. However, this runs counter to the fact that, in Akola city, most of the dog owners kept their canines in separate homes (Hadge *et al.*, 2009) [2]. In this survey of awareness among the pet owners about the management practices it was studied that 150 pet owners (83.33%) had awareness on the hygiene maintenance (Fig 3) and even practiced. While, only 15 pet dog owners were aware about the practical importance of tick channels around the kennels, however none of the pet dog owners in the study adopted this practice in their housing management.

The present study observed that majority of the pet owners in Tirupati have been aware of health care management of dogs.

This included awareness about veterinary hospital/facility, its location and consultation with veterinarians for health care and disease management of their pet dogs. It was tabulated from the results that 83% of the pet dog owners were aware of the cost of treatment; deworming and vaccination whereas remaining respondents (16.66%) were not concerned about cost involved in treatment or the importance of prophylactic measures (Fig 4). Among those who were aware of

deworming and vaccination, cent percent owners adopted the practice and dewormed and vaccinated their pet dogs regularly. Similar to this, Sawaimul, *et al.* (2009) [8] reported that dog deworming and vaccinations were common practises in Nagpur. The study also represented that 97.22% of the dog owners were aware about the incidence of diseases and also about 83.33% were even aware of zoonotic important diseases.

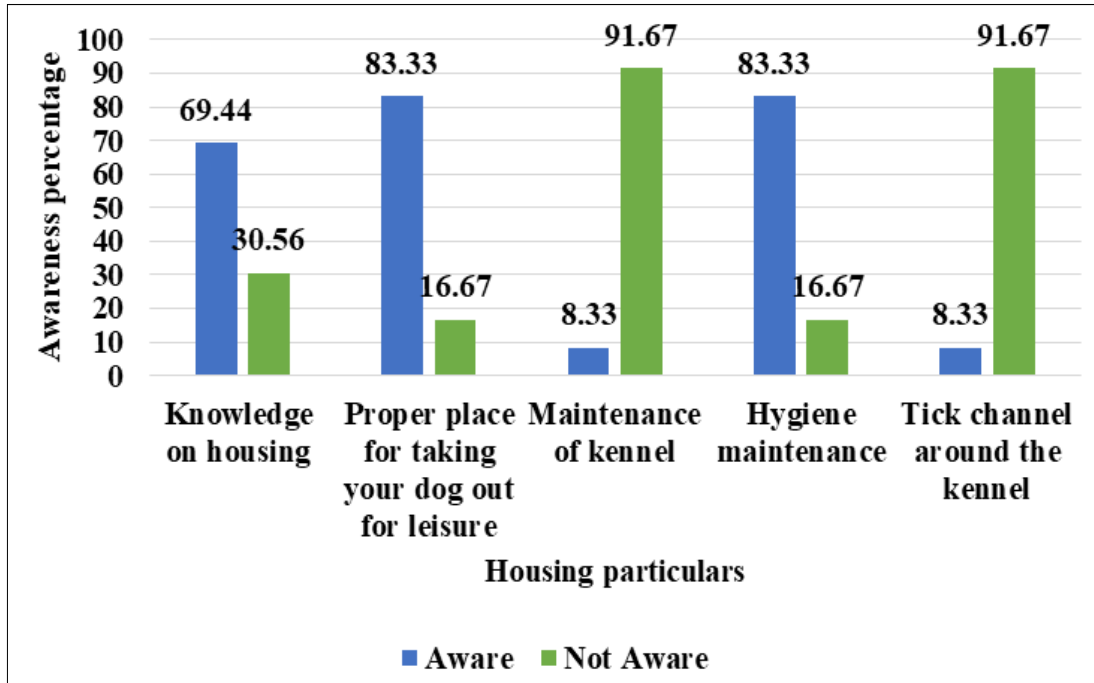


Fig 3: Percentage of awareness on housing particulars

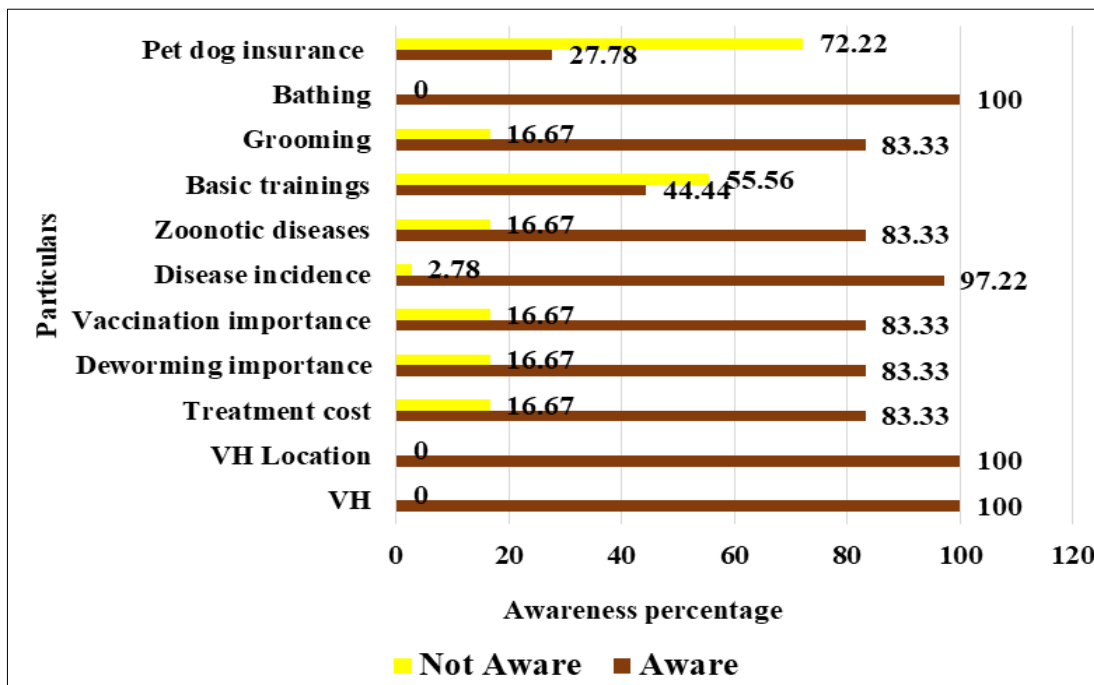


Fig 4: Percentage of awareness on health care and welfare of pet dogs

It was observed and recorded from the data that 44.44% of the pet owners (Fig.4) were aware about the importance of basic training to dogs but only 10 respondents among 180 total pet dog owners interviewed were providing training to their dogs in Tirupati. This may be because; the respondents may not

know how to provide the training or where the dogs are trained in the city. Majority of the pet dog owners were aware of grooming and bathing dogs and it was followed by 150 and 180 pet owners, respectively (Table 1). Similar results were reported by Ramyasri (2019) [6] that only 15% of dog owners

in Hyderabad never groomed their dogs, whereas the bulk of dog owners in Hyderabad groomed their dogs regularly. In contrary Athilakshmy *et al.* (2020) ^[1] in Chennai reported that although majority of pet owners spent more time with their animals, their awareness on benefits of grooming was minimum. A health insurance for pet dog is available in India and it covers the medical needs of the dog. Pet parents with higher disposable income should have awareness on pet insurance as pet dog rearing involves higher expenses. However, pet dog insurance was known to only 50 respondents under the study, however none of them got their pet dog insured.

Longer lifespan and improved welfare for dogs have been made possible by advances in veterinary medicine and a greater understanding of how to regulate canine nutrition during each phase of a dog's life cycle, encompassing growth, maintenance, reproduction, lactation, and senility (Vijayakumar *et al.*, 2006) ^[13]. From the results, it was observed that only a few pet owners were aware of scientific management of dogs while majority of the owners did not much bother about their welfare and species-specific behaviour. Hence, respondents have modified the dog rearing practices as per their comfort and needs.

Conclusions

In order to provide better information to dog owners for upbringing their pets, knowledge dissemination by improved communication skills and aids is essential. Thus, there is a pressing need to increase dog owners' awareness on scientific breeding management through efficient information dissemination that takes into account their top informational priorities. The current situation calls for the creation of expert systems and information based on user needs employing more interactive Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) tools for pet owners.

Conflict of Interest: No Conflict of Interest

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