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Liam Clay is currently a Ph.D. student with the University of Queensland. Currently, his research involves evaluating the behavioural assessments conducted at the RSPCA. Prior to commencing his PhD, Liam previously completed his honours with the RSPCA, monitoring the stress and behaviour of canines over the first five day period post surrender. Liam has been working closely with the RSPCA for 5 years while still partaking in his undergraduate studies, both in research and in work placement. During this time, Liam has found his passion in training, behaviour and identification of behavioural problems in canines.

Abstract

The use of behavioural assessments in shelter environments to recognise behavioural problems and adoption suitability of dogs.

Behavioural assessments have been used in shelter environments in Australia and around the world to identify possible stable behavioural repertoires to help in the rehoming process. In most cases, dogs are allowed a minimum three to five-day acclimation period to the new environment before the assessment is conducted. Shelters use behaviour assessments to predict whether the dog is suitable for rehoming, however, the dynamic nature of behavioural patterns can introduce the potential for inaccurate assessments and interpretation. Thorough evaluation of the accuracy of the utilised sub-tests within the assessment is therefore required to understand if these methods are satisfactory in indicating behavioural problems and adoption suitability. The assessments conducted at RSPCA shelters will be reviewed to understand whether there is a need to create more efficient and effective behavioural assessments, or whether the current assessments provide an accurate picture of a dog's behaviour in the new, adoptive home environment.