

Shelter Dog Adoptability Through Dog Walking: A Study Benefiting Shelter Dogs and Older Adults



Rachel Ray, Student, MU College of Veterinary Medicine
 Rebecca Johnson, PhD, RN, FAAN, Millsap Professor of Gerontological Nursing, MU Sinclair School of Nursing; Director Research Center for Human-Animal Interaction, MU College of Veterinary Medicine
 Charlotte McKenney, RN, BSN, Assistant Director Research Center for Human-Animal Interaction, MU College of Veterinary Medicine
 Annie Chih, Student, MU College of Veterinary Medicine, Columbia, Missouri

Introduction/General Aims

- 5-9 million shelter animals euthanized every year
- Most programs are aimed at reducing the numbers of animals relinquished to shelters
- This study aims to improve adoptability of shelter dogs through an enrichment activity of walking with older adults

Hypothesis

Dogs residing at the animal shelter of a mid-sized midwestern city that participate in a walking program will have:

- Improved behavior
- Increased adoption rates
- Decreased euthanasia rates

Materials & Methods

- Dogs matched with control on age, size (small, medium, large), & breed
- Dogs matched with elderly adult for walking capability, speed
- Experimental Group walked 5 days a week with elderly adult
- Control Group did not walk
- Behaviors assessed and a behavior score assigned daily
- Days to adoption, euthanasia or to foster care recorded when animal left shelter

Experimental (n=56): Walking & adoption outcomes

	n=	#of Walks	% Adopted	% Euthanized	% To Foster
Small	38	117	31.57	0	13.15
Medium	8	41	25	0	37.5
Large	10	40	0	10	0

Table 1. Adoption Outcomes of the Experimental Group



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Figures 1-4: Participants walking in the daily enrichment program.

Control (n=56): Adoption Outcomes

	n=	% Active	% Adopted	% Euthanized	%To Foster
Small	34	23.5	32.3	23.5	20.5
Medium	13	23	46.1	15.3	15.3
Large	9	33.3	0	22.2	44.4

Table 2. Adoption Outcomes of the Control Group

Behavior Instrument

Walk A Hound, Lose A Pound, And Stay Fit For Older Adults

Subject ID: _____
 Date: _____
 Staff ID: _____

Dog Behavior Appraisal

WASH ID# _____ Matched: _____
 CMIS ID# _____ WASH ID# _____
 Name: _____ CMIS ID# _____
 Age: _____
 Breed: _____
 Exit destination: _____
 Exit study date: _____

Size: Small Medium Large

Please rate each of the following items describing the dog's behavior when you enter its kennel.

Behavior	1 Not at all	2 A little	3 Quite a bit	4 A lot
Jumping up				
Spinning around				
Pawing you				
Barking when it sees the collar				
Eating food				
Drinking water				
Unable to hold still				
Resisting you putting on the collar				
Resisting you putting on the leash				
Pulling when walking on the leash				

Behavior in the kennel: _____ Stands calmly: _____ Sits calmly: _____ Lies down: _____ Covers in the back: _____

Demographic Description

- Total Number of Dog Pairs: 56
- Ages Ranged from: 4 months to 9 years of age
- Total # of Walks: 198
- Number of Walks/Participant Range: 1-18
- Ave # of walks per participant: 3.53



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