

Percentage Analysis of Knowledge Level for Dog-Ownership in Rural Areas of Gujarat

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Abstract: Increasing interest has been observed to own dogs for different purposes in rural areas of Gujarat. Present survey was carried out in to evaluate knowledge level on dog-ownership in a total of 115 dog-owners from five villages near Anand, Gujarat. Majority of dog-owners kept a dog on their cattle farm. Use of dogs for protecting livestock farms by owners remains the most common purpose of dog-ownership. All dog-owners were unaware about transmissible diseases of dogs in rural area. Results suggest the basic requirement of extension education for rural dog-owners to impart knowledge on dog healthcare and management as well as on diseases of dogs.

Keywords: Dog-ownership, knowledge level, rural areas, Gujarat.

I. INTRODUCTION

The term human-animal bond is used to describe the relationship between people and their pets or domesticated animals. The mental as well as physical benefits or positive consequences of dog-ownership are well documented [1]. Dogs have been selected, bred and used for various purposes, viz., hunting purpose, herding, protection, assisting police and military, companionship, and more recently, aiding handicapped individuals. The impact on human society has given them the nickname “Man’s best friend” or “Furry companion” or “Fine-feathered friend” in the Western world [2]. General practice among dog-owners is to prefer pure breeds of dogs as companions. A widely accepted well defined classification of Indian domestic dogs is not available. Most of the Indian breeds of dogs are known by different names. (e.g., Gaddi, Banjara, Rampur hound, Bhutia, Himalayan sheep dog and Mongrel). Knowledge of dog-owners in urban areas is well documented while data on knowledge level for dog-ownership in rural areas is less. Despite an increased awareness by researchers over past several years of the wide scope and magnitude of diseases, lack of knowledge in dog-owners of rural areas on appropriate dog-ownership, dog healthcare as well as management remains a challenge.

II. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey was carried at Teaching Veterinary Clinical Complex (TVCC) (Latitude 22°32’32.1858”, Longitude 72°57’22.8054”) of C.V.Sc. & A.H., Anand, Gujarat state (India). Dog-owners from different rural areas in and around Anand (Latitude 22°33’21.6”, Longitude 72°57’3.5994”) district visit hospital for health checkup of dogs. A total of 115 dog owners from rural area in Anand as well as Borsad (Latitude 22°25’1.5708”, Longitude 72°53’48.1488”), Gamdi (Latitude 22°34’25.3446”, Longitude 72°58’21.4674”), Gana (Latitude 22°30’19.5294”, Longitude 72°54’54.1794”) and Sandesar (Latitude 22°31’10.257”, Longitude 72°52’43.9356”) villages were interviewed for percentage analysis of the their knowledge level on dog-ownership using a questionnaire. Criteria included queries on family members, other animals owned, house types used for dogs, regular healthcare and management aspects, food offered to dogs, purpose of dog-ownership and others. Highest percentage of dog-owners confronting query is recorded and discussed.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of 115, 89 (77.39%) dog-owners belonged to a family with ≤ 5 family members suggesting possibilities of direct physical contact with dogs. Education level among rural people has an impact on dog-ownership. Highest percentage (42.61%) of dog-owners from rural areas belonged to group with education level up to 10th standard group followed by education level up to 12th standard (33.04%), up to graduation (19.13%), up to 5th standard (03.48%) and higher education (01.74%). Breed preference for owning a dog is observed in urban areas, however, in the present survey, 51.30% dog-owners agreed to have breed preference of dog for ownership. This value was non-significant with 48.70% of dog-owners showing disagreement to have breed preference. Cost incurred with purchase and breeding of dogs was the major constraint for lower breed preference in dog-owners of rural areas. Among various purposes of dog-ownership, guarding purpose was reported from highest percentage (53.91%) of dog-owners followed by dog-owners with rescued/adopted dogs (18.27%), dog-owners with dogs for companionship (11.30%) and dog-ownership as hobby (11.30%). Majority (66.09%) of dog-owners belonged to group with only one owned dog. Type of housing for dog has its effects on general well-being of dog and their owners. This criterion added in questionnaire revealed highest percentage (44.35%) of dog-owners kept their dogs in pakka house with an access to open areas. Furthermore, 27.82% dog-owners kept their dogs in open areas while 07.83% kept in kachcha house type. Deworming and vaccination are basic healthcare requirements for dogs. A total of 103 (89.57%) dog-owners agreed to be aware of deworming protocol for dogs while only 79 (68.70%) owners agreed to be aware of vaccination against infectious diseases in dogs. Majority (72.17%) of dog owners agreed not to visit veterinarian for regular health checkup of dogs which ultimately resulted in poor healthcare of dogs. Economy of dog-owners remained one of the most frequently reported constrain with this outcome. Fifty eight (50.43%) dog-owners provided homemade diet to their dogs while percentage analysis for owners providing mixed-diet and commercial diet was 32.17% and 17.40%, respectively. Various types of skin diseases are reported in dogs including some of zoonotic importance [5]. Highest percentage (51.30%) of dog-owners agreed to bathe their dogs fortnightly. Percentage records of dog-owners bathing their dogs once in a month, once in a week and occasionally were 24.35%, 09.57% and 14.78%, respectively. Out of 115, 89 (77.39%) owners agreed to be aware of products used for bathing the dogs.

A total of 72 (62.61%) dog-owners kept their dogs at cattle farm in rural areas. As a measure of controlling overpopulation, 83 (72.17%) owners agreed to be aware of breeding strategies for their dogs while other 27.83% showed disagreement for awareness against proper breeding practices. One hundred and three (89.57%) dog-owners agreed to have control over their dogs' behavior when introduced to strangers as well as other animals. All (100%) owners showed agreement not to have proper exposure to educational media on dog-ownership as well as knowledge on transmission of infectious as well as zoonotic diseases from dogs. Despite an increased awareness by researchers over the past several decades, rural dog-owners' knowledge appears to have changed little. Reports are available on lack of proper knowledge among dog-owners suggesting a need for accessible information for dog-owners by exposure to mass media and other means of education [2-4].

IV. CONCLUSION

Among rural areas, dog-owners prefer to have dogs at their livestock farms in order to protect their farms from invaders. Keeping besides this, dog-owners showed variable response to other queries. Results provide baseline data and suggest that dog-owners in rural areas lack knowledge over basic aspects of dog-ownership. Knowledge on veterinary care as well as transmissible diseases should be improved among dog-owners of rural areas. This can be accomplished by surveying a large population of dog-owners in a broader range of rural areas in Gujarat. It is concluded that extension education is required for dog-owners of rural areas in order to impart knowledge on basic dog healthcare and management practices as well as on understanding of transmissible or zoonotic diseases.

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