

Spoken presentation IRSEA CONGRESS 2014, “Behavioural Medicine”

Case Report: The “nutty” English Staffordshire Terrier: A simple case of Hyper-Reactivity!

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Keywords: dog, behaviour, hyper-reactivity, hyperactivity, fluoxetine

A 2YO male, neutered, English Staffordshire Terrier with a lameness problem presented for hyperactivity, excessive nipping and jumping on people. There was concern about the risk of inadvertent harm to children. The dog was referred by an orthopaedic surgeon who was reluctant to operate on his elbow because of the dog’s behaviour.

The dog had been “hyper” since he was 6 weeks old, had knocked a small child over and nipped several young children. Many different treatment strategies (including all 4 forms of operant conditioning) had been exhausted. The dog was receiving insufficient exercise due to the lameness issue.

Physical examination, CBC and biochemistry panel revealed no further abnormalities other than a left front leg lameness caused by coronoid pathology, which had been previously diagnosed upon CT-scan by an orthopaedic surgeon and radiologist.

The dog pulled the male owner into the consultation room, initially jumped several times on the owner and behaviour veterinarian and repeatedly nipped and jumped up on them throughout the consultation. The dog reacted to external stimuli but was able to intermittently rest and sleep. It was difficult for the client to re-direct the dog when reactive.

The diagnosis was Hyper-Reactivity.

Treatment was initiated with 1 mg/kg fluoxetine PO SID. Behaviour modification focused but was not limited to clarifying owner animal communication. Risk management was explained to the client. They were taught to use a U-Lead and at a later date a Gentle Leader® to improve attention training when outdoors.

The dog’s behaviour improved considerably.

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