

Hiby EF, Rooney NJ, Bradshaw JWS. 2004. Dog training methods: their use, effectiveness and interaction with behaviour and welfare. *Animal Welfare* 13:63-69.

Abstract

Historically, pet dogs were trained using mainly negative reinforcement or punishment, but positive reinforcement using rewards has recently become more popular. The methods used may have different impacts on the dogs' welfare. We distributed a questionnaire to 364 dog owners in order to examine the relative effectiveness of different training methods and their effects upon a pet dog's behaviour. When asked how they trained their dog on seven basic tasks, 66% reported using vocal punishment, 12% used physical punishment, 60% praise (social reward), 51% food rewards and 11% play. The owner's ratings for their dog's obedience during eight tasks correlated positively with the number of tasks which they trained using rewards ($P < 0.01$), but not using punishment ($P = 0.05$). When asked whether their dog exhibited any of 16 common problematic behaviours, the number of problems reported by the owners correlated with the number of tasks for which their dog was trained using punishment ($P < 0.001$), but not using rewards ($P = 0.17$). Exhibition of problematic behaviours may be indicative of compromised welfare, because such behaviours can be caused by—or result in—a state of anxiety and may lead to a dog being relinquished or abandoned. Because punishment was associated with an increased incidence of problematic behaviours, we conclude that it may represent a welfare concern without concurrent benefits in obedience. We suggest that positive training methods may be more useful to the pet-owning community.