

Evolution of puppy behavior around adoption period: Study on the cohort of 44 Golden Retriever puppies.

I. Bendahmane ^{1,2}, L. Montagnier¹, K. Kezimana¹, O. Richard¹, A. Meynadier ² and H. Mila ¹

¹NeoCare, ENVT, Université de Toulouse, 31300 Toulouse, France

²GenPhySE, Université de Toulouse, INRAE, ENVT, F-31326, Castanet Tolosan, France.

Adoption is a stressful period for puppies, leading to economic losses for breeders and owners and well-being impairment for animals. This study aimed to assess behavioral changes during the adoption period. Forty-four puppies were included from 9 litters (6 ± 3 puppy/litter). The day before adoption (59 ± 3 days) and 7 days later, puppies were filmed in 2 different rooms at 3 different situations: free exploration, interactive toy and noise exposure (Riemer et al. 2013). A total of 43 behavioral parameters were evaluated and quantified using Boris Behavior (version 8.20.3). Rstudio (version 2023.06.0+421) was used for statistics. Paired t-test revealed significant increases in total movement time ($p < 0.001$), toy interaction time ($p = 0.002$) and the number of barks ($p = 0.006$) 1 week after compared with before adoption. While, crying time ($p < 0.001$), latency before the first movement ($p = 0.025$), latency before interaction with the toy ($p = 0.003$), proximity time ($p = 0.03$) and evaluator observation time ($p < 0.001$) were decreased after adoption versus before. Our findings suggest an increase in detachment of puppies from the reference person following adoption. Overall, adopting puppies at 8 weeks does not compromise their behavioral development.