

# Using an Approach Test and Questionnaire to Predict Outcomes In the First Year of a Dog's Life

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Behavioral issues in pet dogs remain to be the foremost reason given for surrendering of dogs to rescue shelters and are one of the leading causes of euthanasia in young dogs. Prevention of and early intervention for behavioral concerns have been perpetuated by a lack of data and research that is able to identify potentially problematic or abnormal behaviors early in life. This research sought to create tools (e.g., Working Dog Questionnaire- Pet Version and the approach test) which may help, as part of a test series, to identify such behavioral markers. Thirty-nine dogs were recruited for this behavioral study. The data from their questionnaires and approach test values were compared between their first visit (3-months) and fourth visit (12-months). The longer a dog took to approach a novel human, the more likely they were to require a treat lure to do so (Pearson correlation coefficient;  $R = 0.8671$ ;  $p=0.0001$ ). The longer a dog took to approach, the more likely they were to retreat to their human as well (Chi-square test - Chi square = 1.6092,  $p = 1.6092$ ). Dogs were screened for fearful behaviors through the questionnaire and those who scored  $\geq 16$  took longer than those who scored 0 to approach the human (Mann Whitney U = 28.5; 1-tailed test score; z-score = 1.65653,  $p = 0.04846$ ). Importantly, dogs were not found to improve their latency scores between 3-months and 12-months (Pearson correlation coefficient;  $R = 0.5131$ ;  $p = 0.0023$ ). These data are suggestive of the fact that reluctance to approach a novel human is a behavior that will not improve with time and that they are at risk for additional potentially problematic behaviors.