

Lasting lockdown love:



What influenced the strength of the relationship between owners and their now grown-up Pandemic Puppies? Lessons for future owners and dogs

- A weak owner-dog relationship can lead to rehoming of the dog or other welfare concerns, and affect owner wellbeing.
- Could the changes in how owners bought and brought up their puppies in 2020 weaken the owner-dog relationship?
- This study of dogs purchased during COVID-19 contributes to a better understanding of owner-dog relationships overall.

Study methods

The Pandemic Puppies project is a longitudinal study of dogs bought as puppies aged <16 weeks old during the 2020 phase of the pandemic.

This study used data from 794 owners who completed two surveys: when the dogs were puppies in 2020 and when the dogs were 21-months old.

Relationship strength was measured in the "21-months old" survey, using two scores from the Monash Dog-Owner Relationship Scale.

'Closeness' measured feelings of companionship, attachment and love.

'Costs' measured feelings that their dog was a burden, including time, emotion, effort as well as ongoing financial costs.

Key study results

After pandemic-related factors such as not being able to attend puppy classes were taken into account.

methods* was linked to higher **Closeness** scores

Using fewer

aversive training

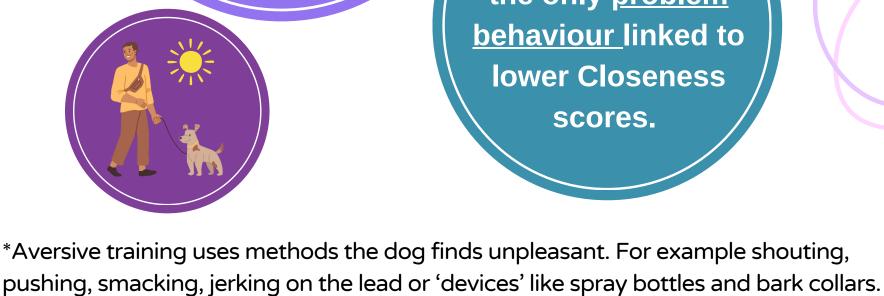


bought puppies <u>specifically</u> because of the pandemic had higher Costs scores

Owners who

reported <u>problem</u> behaviours had higher Costs scores

Owners who



behaviour linked to **lower Closeness** scores. *Aversive training uses methods the dog finds unpleasant. For example shouting,

Aggression was

the only problem

Study conclusions

Problem behaviours have major negative impacts on the relationship between owners and their Pandemic dogs.

dogs bought during 2020. Addressing unwanted behaviour in dogs could help strengthen the owner-dog relationship:

Problem behaviours are very common in dogs, not only in

Choose reward-based training. To manage unwanted behaviours, seek veterinary advice

registered behaviourist. Anyone considering getting a dog should "stop and think"

planning could help prevent a weaker relationship with

for underlying health problems and referral to an ABTC

carefully about how their dog will fit in their lives - now and in the future. Given dogs live on average for 12 years, better

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