



## Module 14

# Companion Animal Management

## Student Activities

### Questions

- 1. Humans keep companion, or 'pet' animals, for social contact and pleasure. Identify and describe three of the most prevalent welfare problems that you will encounter in practice when treating the most commonly kept companion animal species: dogs and cats.**

**(6 marks)**

- Obesity – where the animal is overfed this predisposes pets to other health related issues such as diabetes mellitus and osteoarthritis.
- Breed specific hereditary disorders and illnesses – for example hip dysplasia in German Shepherd dogs and mitral valve disease in Cavalier King Charles.
- Behavioural problems – these can include different forms of aggression towards other animals and people for example.
- Malnutrition – In the case of exotic species, little is known about their physical and behavioural needs making it relatively difficult to provide a suitable diet.
- Parasitism – for example worms, ticks and fleas can cause the animal physical discomfort and may also spread disease.

- 2. Working in veterinary practice you will treat companion animals experiencing welfare issues that you will need to discuss with the animal's owner. Identify the five main areas which influence welfare that you should discuss with the client during a clinical consultation. Make sure that you include all aspects of welfare rather than health in isolation.**

**(5 marks)**

- Health (prevent and treat disease)
- Social needs (species-appropriate solitary or group housing)
- Nutrition (suitability of diet, dental health)
- Environment (adequate space and environmental stimulation)
- Behaviour (understanding communication, use of humane training methods)

**3. Educating clients in responsible pet ownership is one of the key roles of the veterinarian. Name three essential actions that vets should recommend clients to carry out in order to successfully demonstrate responsible pet ownership. For each, explain the impact that taking the identified action can have for animal welfare.**

**(6 marks)**

- Permanent identification - if a pet runs away it is at risk of various welfare issues associated with being stray or being kept in dog or cat shelters. If the pet is micro-chipped however they can be reunited with their owner more quickly.
- Neutering – unneutered pets can reproduce and create overpopulation which can in turn result in more stray animals and overcrowded shelters with associated welfare issues.
- Training their dog – well socialised and appropriately trained pets (using humane methods) adapt to life with more ease and are less likely to develop behavioural problems and engage in unruly behaviour towards other animals and people.

**4. The specialisation within veterinary medicine that deals with stray animals and their management and care is called Shelter Medicine. The welfare of stray animals can in some cases be considered better than that of companion animals in some ways. For example, stray animals have greater freedom of movement and control over their lives. Identify and describe three potentially poor welfare scenarios encountered by stray animals.**

**(6 marks)**

- Injury from road traffic accidents – associated with experience of pain and susceptibility to other complications such as infection, disease and inability to compete for food.
- Lack of food and water – leading to malnutrition for example.
- Competition for resources such as mating partners and food, leading to higher incidence of fighting with associated injury, wounds, pain and stress.
- Increased risk parasites and the spreading of infectious diseases.

**5. Aside from welfare issues that stray animals may be susceptible too, there are some wider problems stray animals may cause for other animals and people too. Identify four problems that stray animals may cause for people.**

**(4 marks)**

- Stray animals can contribute to pollution levels, physically by indiscriminately depositing faeces and urine and also noise pollution through excessive vocalisation (barking for example).
- Direct physical injury to humans (through dog bites) and to people's pets and livestock.
- Indirect injury or even loss of life to humans due to stray animals causing traffic accidents.
- Stray dogs and can be a reservoir of disease organisms that can affect humans (zoonoses) and their pets too.

**6. In addition to directly treating the animal, as a vet it is also your responsibility to encourage and support your clients to be responsible pet owners in order to improve animal welfare. What are the five main components of responsible pet ownership?**

**(5 marks)**

- Ensuring the behavioural and physiological needs of the pet are provided for.
- Ensuring the pet is well socialised in a variety of environments and with other animals (and in the case of dogs, humanely trained).
- Reducing the risk of transmitting disease or inflicting injury to humans.
- Reducing the risk of inflicting injury or transmitting disease to other animals.
- Reducing the risk of pollution or nuisance to society in general.

**7. Various approaches to the management of stray populations have been developed and adopted in different parts of the world. Mass killing involves using a range of means to control populations, such as poisoning, trapping, drowning, electrocution, gassing, starvation and shooting. Identify and explain three disadvantages associated with mass killing programmes.**

**(6 marks)**

- Ineffective – The population density of dogs and cats is related to the availability of food and if mass killing kills 75 per cent of the dogs or cats, the improved food availability for the survivors will improve fertility and the survival of more puppies or kittens to adulthood.
- Inhumane methods – Killing using poison, traps or shooting them can impose an inhumanely prolonged experience of pain, distress and suffering before death is achieved.

- Indiscriminate – It is possible for owned animals to be killed alongside stray animals. There is also a risk imposed to the safety and well-being of humans.
- Difficulty – Technically it can be hard to have enough man-power and resources to trace or capture stray animals
- Promotes inhumanity as the norm – There is an implicit message that it is acceptable to kill animals inhumanely (often violently) as it is carried out by authority figures, often dressed in a municipal uniform. This may have knock on effects on how adults and children form attitudes to violence in general and therefore how they treat animals and other people.
- Alienates sections of society – Ignores some stakeholders who have strong concerns for the welfare of animals in the community.

**8. Veterinarians can advise public authorities against mass killing of stray animals and propose a more effective and humane method of population control. Identify the six main components of the World Health Organisation (WHO) framework for effectively controlling stray dogs.**

**(6 marks)**

- Legislation
- Registration and identification
- Garbage Control
- Neutering owned and non-owned animals
- Control of breeders, pet shops and sales outlets
- Education

**9. Legislation can provide a strong basis for the development and implementation of stray animal population control programmes. Identify four essential characteristics required for such legislation to be of good quality and to be effective?**

**(4 marks)**

- Realistic, practical and clear
- Adequate provision for enforcement
- Balances the need for penalties and education
- Enforcement generally requires proof of ownership.

**10. Neuter and release programmes involve the capture, neutering, identification and vaccination of strays and release to the same site. As a vet with concern for the welfare of stray animals, identify the six different stages of such a programme.**  
**(6 marks)**

- The initial catching of animals
- Transportation of the caught animals to the kennelling area
- Design and quality of the pre-operative kennelling area
- The pre, peri and post operative procedures and care of the animals
- Transport back to the area where the animals are to be released
- Monitoring of the neutered animals after release

## In-class activities

### Discussions

Consider allowing 40 to 60 minutes for this class discussion.

**Part 1** – In pairs find out about each others attitudes towards neutering animals.

**Part 2** – Divide into four groups, each of which will discuss one of the following situations:

Group 1 – Explore the reasons for neutering **pet** animals and how performing this procedure and how consequent neutered status may **improve** the welfare of the animal.

Group 2 – Explore the reasons for neutering **pet** animals and how performing this procedure and how having the consequent neutered status may **decrease** the welfare of the animal.

Group 3 – Explore the reasons for neutering **stray** animals and how performing this procedure and how having the consequent neutered status may **improve** the welfare of the animal.

Group 4 – Explore the reasons for neutering **stray** animals and how performing this procedure and how having the consequent neutered status may **decrease** the welfare of the animal.

**Part 3** – Allow the groups to share their thoughts according to the groupings listed below. Then move them around until all groups have had the opportunity to talk to each other.

1: Group 1 with Group 2; Group 3 with Group 4

2: Group 1 with Group 3; Group 2 with Group 4

3: Group 1 with Group 4; Group 2 with Group 3

**Part 4** – As a class explore what attitudes towards neutering are in light of the group discussions and whether there have been any changes in these attitudes during the course of this discussion.

## Welfare presentation

In groups, students should prepare a welfare presentation concerning the neutering of dogs or cats.

Lecturers are advised to use their discretion in the awarding of marks and in the feedback given to students regarding their presentation skills. A good presentation contains typical sections such as:

1. Relevant background
2. Welfare science:
  - What are the welfare infringements?
  - How severe are they?
  - How long do they last (or how long does the animal suffer?)?
  - How many animals are affected?
3. Ethics:
  - Theories, principles and frameworks that are relevant to your argument
  - Related ethical concerns and dilemmas
  - Consideration of professional ethics and issues
4. Law and/or welfare codes/minimum standards/other policy documentations as appropriate:
  - Is there any legislation nationally or internationally?
  - Are there voluntary standards?
  - Are there market place standards?
  - Comparison with other species?
5. Summary/Conclusion
6. References list

A good presenter speaks clearly and slowly, and doesn't engage in distracting habits such as clicking a pen while speaking or jangling change in his or her pockets. They should remain relatively still and not move about too much which can also be distracting to the audience.

PowerPoint slides should also contain the minimum amount of text and the presenter should know the subject well enough (or read from additional notes) so that the slide works as a prompt rather than the presenter simply reading the entire slide to the audience and adding nothing extra.