ANIMAL WELFARE PROGRAM FOR MILITARY WORKING DOGS IN BRAZIL: CLINICAL BEHAVIOURAL AND PERFORMANCE ANALYSYS

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Summary

Military working dogs (MWD) have been a valuable resource for the Brazilian Army for over 70 years, although their specific welfare needs are yet to be established. The aim of the present work was to map the animal welfare (AW) situation of MWDs in a selected unit, as well as producing and implementing an AW program.

Methods-Results

Fourteen animals were included in the study: males and females, 2-12 years old, Rottweiler, German Shepherd and Belgian Malinois (BM).

The assessment of the animals, done before and after the execution of the program, was divided in: 1- Behavioural consultation, 2- Performance test (PT) [1], 3- Work and AW assessment (discussed in another abstract). Results were compared by ANOVA ($p < 0.05$).

The AW program lasted for five months, based on a previous report from our group [2]. The program had two training modules (30h total), besides recommendations and adjustments to the animal handling routine.

The first clinical behavioural evaluation revealed minor signs of high-level activation/arousal, particularly in older animals. In subsequent evaluations, one dog presented acral dermatitis, which might have been triggered by an increase in training demand. Medication and training adjustments solved the aforementioned condition.

PT results indicated the AW program influenced two of the six test exercises, as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Performance test grades, obtained by MWD before and after the execution of an AW program.

Section	Exercise	Before	After
Obedience	1. Guided handling	25.0	26.4
	2. "Sit"	20.0	20.0
	3. "Down/Here"	30.0	30.0
	4. "Rest"	25.0	22.2
Protection	1. Assault (Run and bite)	35.7	40.7*
	2. "Out"	20.7	25.0*
	Total	159.0	161.0

* ($p < 0.05$)

Conclusion

In summary, the AW program was able to affect positively some performance indicators, but it did not change others. Moreover, if a clinical behavioural intervention had not been made, problems would have probably arisen. Further improvements in the structuring and execution of the program should be implemented.

References

[1]   Exército Brasileiro, CI 11-426. 2019.
[2]   O. A. B. Soares, F. Ishi, J. L. Vetorazzo, F. B. Soares, and N. D. M. G. Vieira, "Proposal of a customized animal welfare protocol for military kennels," *Pet Behaviour Science*, vol. 7, no. 7, pp. 24–28, 2019, doi: 10.21071/pbs.v0i7.11802.