

ANIMAL WELFARE PROGRAM FOR MILITARY WORKING DOGS IN BRAZIL: WORK ROUTINE AND EMOTIONAL STATE PROFILE

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Summary

Military working dogs (MWD) have been a valuable tool for the Brazilian Army for over seven decades, although their specific welfare needs are yet to be investigated. The aim of the present work was to execute an animal welfare (AW) program for MWD and investigate its influence on dogs' welfare and performance.

Methods-Results

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

The evaluation of the animals included: 1- Work/leisure routine quantification; 2- Emotional state profile (ESP) assessment [1], 3- Behavioural and performance evaluation (discussed in another abstract). We compared results using the Student "t" test for repeated measures and ANOVA ($p < 0.05$).

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

The work quantification revealed a significant increase in time spent on training. Despite the increase, the absolute number (3 min/dog/ day) is still low, far from the recommended minimum (12 min/day/dog). That can be explained by taking into consideration that some dogs trained much more than others, as well as the high number of hours which they spent performing service.

The ESP results of the animals are shown in the graph below.

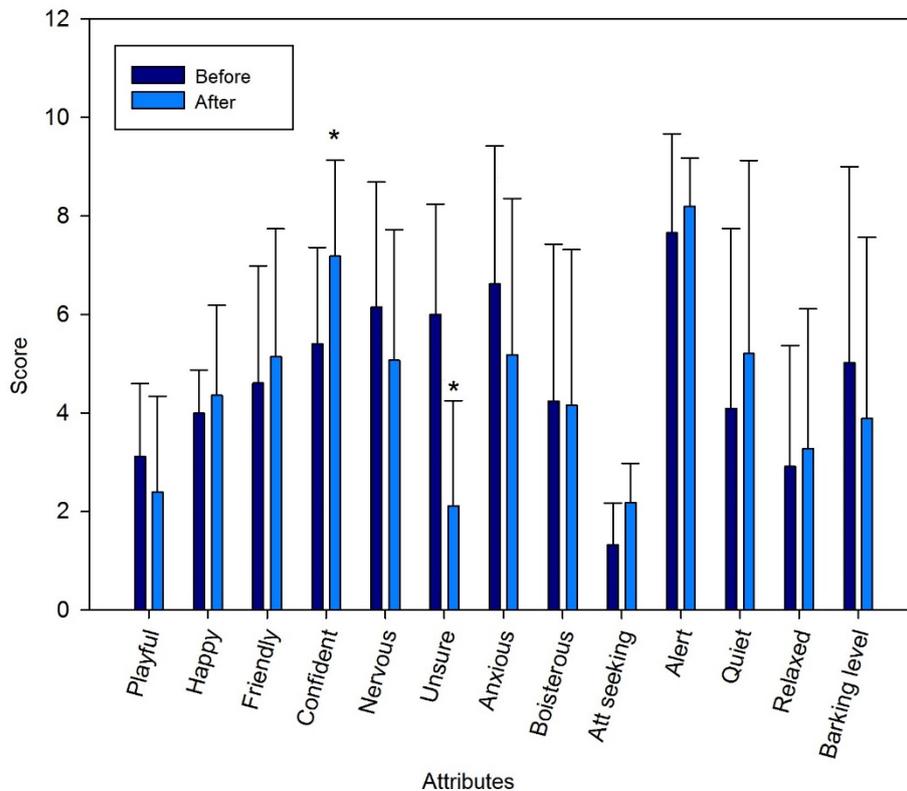


Figure 1. Graph showing average scores of all Emotional State Profile attributes of MWD before and after the Animal Welfare program. * = statistical difference (P<0.05).

The ESP attributes have a large individual variance; therefore, it becomes difficult to establish significant statistical differences. However, the AW program applied could influence positively at least two of the thirteen attributes measured.

Conclusion

In summary, the AW program was able to affect positively some welfare indicators, but it did not change others. Further improvements should be implemented in structuring and execution before applying it in other kennels.

References

[1] S. Barnard et al. "Welfare Assessment Protocol for Shelter Dogs," Teramo, Italy, 2014. Accessed: Jan. 23, 2022.

- [2] O. A. B. Soares et al. "Proposal of a customized animal welfare protocol for military kennels" *Pet Behaviour Science*, v. 7, n. 7, p. 24–28, 2019, doi: 10.21071/pbs.v0i7.11802.