



13-14 November 2025

EVALUATING WELFARE IN HOSPITALIZED CATS AND DOGS

Mihnea Iorga, Alexandra Grigoreanu, Cristina Gașpar, Alexandru Udrea, Cristian Lăzărescu
Affiliation 1; University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I" from Timișoara, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine,
300645, Calea Aradului No. 119, Timișoara, Romania
* Correspondence: alexandra.grigoreanu@usvt.ro

Abstract: This study was set out to investigate the welfare of animal patients during the time of hospitalization, and how their behavior would change over the hospitalization period. We followed a total of 50 animals, of which 34 dogs and 16 cats, over a hospitalization period of 5 days, within the Veterinary Medicine Faculty's clinical accommodation. By observing their behavior daily and assessing their interaction with the clinic's personnel, we were able to see a decrease in unwated behaviors, like for example: avoidance, anxiety and aggressiveness; and an uptick in cooperation with the personnel, given proper and professional conduct by said personnel. Most desirable traits, including but not limited to initiating contact, relaxed body language, normal eating/drinking habits, accepting medication, started to appear from the third day of hospitalization, and by the end of the five day observation period, a big majority of animals expressed those traits. These results put an emphasis on the importance of proper treatment and handling provided by the caretakers towards the hospitalized patients, showing that this both increases the welfare and cooperation of patients, and decreases the stress felt.
Keywords: animal welfare, animal stress response, hospitalization, animal behavior.

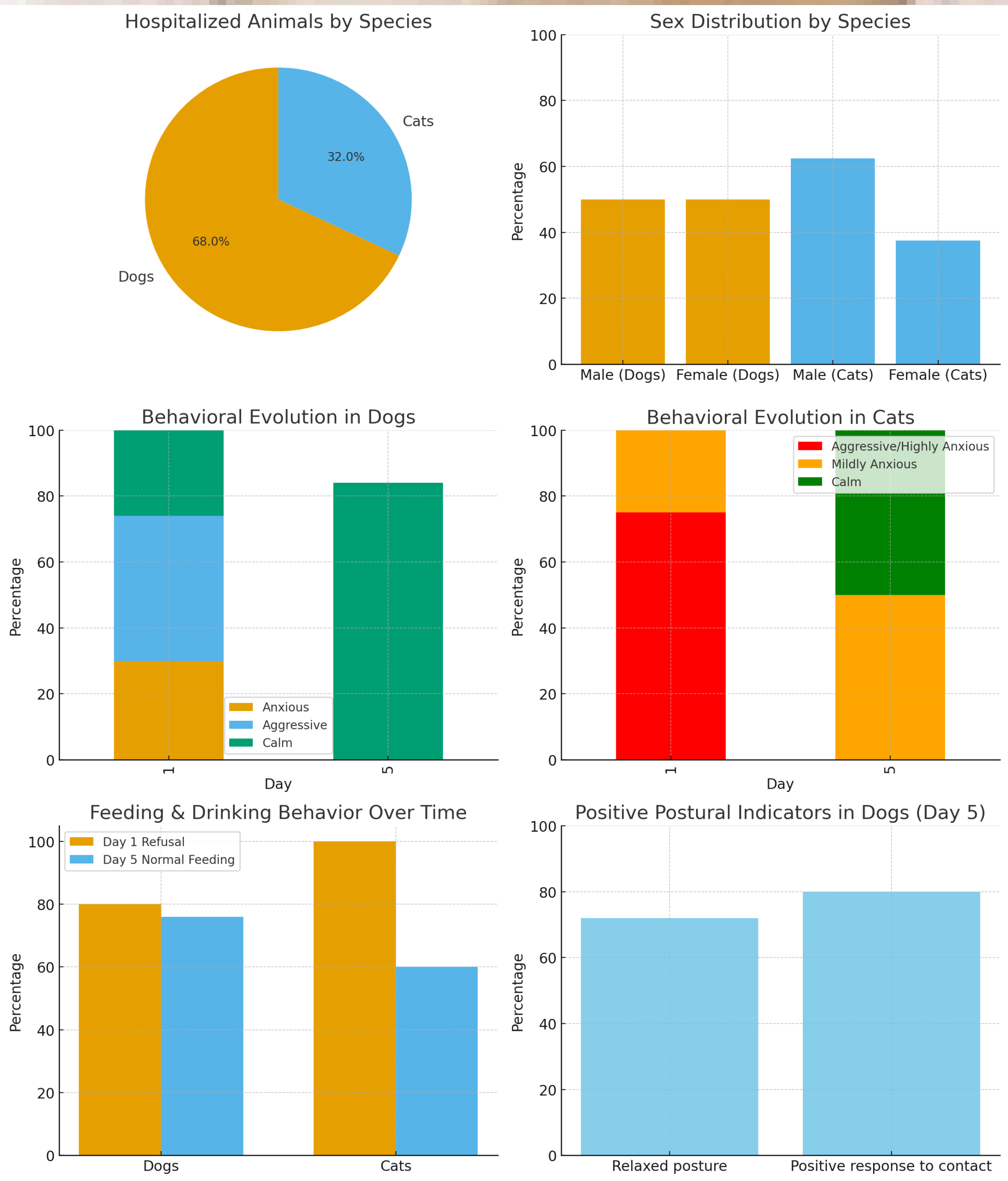
• Introduction

Animal welfare has gained growing importance in veterinary medicine, reflecting societal and ethical concern for the quality of life of animals under human care. Hospitalization represents a period of heightened stress for companion animals, as it involves separation from familiar environments, exposure to new stimuli, and repeated handling by unfamiliar personnel. Stress during hospitalization can negatively impact recovery, immune response, and behavioral stability. Understanding and monitoring the welfare of hospitalized animals is therefore essential to ensure optimal recovery and humane care.

• Material and method

	Score interpretation								
Behavior during handling	Indicator 1			Indicator 2			Indicator 3		
	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
	Calm	Anxious	Aggressive	Calm	Anxious	Aggressive	Calm	Anxious	Aggressive
Interaction with the team	Indicator 1			Indicator 2					
	0	1	2	0	1	2			
	YES	-	NO	Calm	-	Reticent			
Response to the environment/new people	Indicator 1			Indicator 2			Indicator 3		
	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
	Curious	Anxious	Avoiding	No	Rarely	Yes	Explorative	Freeze	Aggressive
Vocalizations	Indicator 1			Indicator 2					
	0	1	2	0	1	2			
	No	Barks	Whines/Pants	Happy	Howling	Bites/Growls			
Feeding and watering behaviors	Indicator 1			Indicator 2			Indicator 3		
	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
	Normal	Decreased/Increased	Absent	Normal	Decreased/Increased	Absent	Slow	Fast	Normal
Defecating behaviors	Indicator 1			Indicator 2			Indicator 3		
	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
	Normal	Decreased	Increased	Normal	Diarrhea	Constipation	Exterior	-	Interior
Stress or discomfort	Indicator 1			Indicator 2			Indicator 3		
	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
	No	-	Yes	No	Selective	Avoiding	No	-	Yes
Body language with indicators of stress or pain	Indicator 1			Indicator 2			Indicator 3		
	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
	Normal	Moderate	Obvious	Normal	Moderate	Obvious	Normal	Moderate	Obvious

• Results and discussions



• Conclusions

Given enough time, patience and proper care, medical staff and pet parents alike can see improvements most pets's behavior and welfare, behaviors such as aggression and avoidance being much lower at the end of the hospitalization than at the beginning, making the animals much more cooperative when it came to medications and routine procedures. They can always be on the lookout for behavioral and physiological signs, such as for example excessive/absent vocalization, the eating/drinking habits, engagement of contact/avoidance of the medical staff, to assess the welfare and stress states of the pet. Our study emphasizes the need for ongoing education of veterinary medical staff in understanding and interpreting animal "sign language", for them to properly engage with the pets during routine procedures. Future research should focus on more effective ways of approaching wounded/under treatment animal, in order to maintain the highest standards of animal welfare.