

## ASPECTS REFERRING TO RECIDIVIST AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR IN ROTTWEILERS

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### *Abstract*

*Eleven dogs of the Rottweiler breed were studied in order to notice the evolution of the submission-aggressiveness ambivalent behaviour conditioned by the master (temperament, time allotted to the dog, etc.) and by the environment they live in. All the dogs were trained in similar conditions for six months by specialists. Watchdogs were finally tested and proved to have the qualities for these activities in point of psycho-motive aspects. Eight months after the training came to an end, they checked the behaviour of the dogs and noticed that four dogs had the characteristic features acquired during the training session (watching something and attacking somebody), three had a delayed reaction to orders and four had major behavioural deviations, which were conditioned in time, consciously or unconsciously, by their masters' physiological and nervous features. The behavioural changes were more obvious in the dogs trained for watching a building (three subjects) than in the ones for entertainment (one subject). Taking this into account, the owners or temporary holders of watchdogs must have minimum knowledge of the ambivalent behaviour brought about by the submission-aggressiveness motivational conflict.*

*Key words:* Rottweiler, aggressive behaviour

### *Introduction*

Any behaviour is a chain reaction, which comprises several phases that are carried out in an order imposed by the organization of the biological nature and the stimulus intensity and the conditions in which the behavioural act takes place [11, 12]. The first noticeable moment of behaviour is marked by the relationship between a receiver and the stimuli. The information is received, codified and transferred to the central nervous system. Here the second moment takes place, the brain cortical elements decoding and analyzing the information that was received. Further on, either the information is stored, enriching the experience with new data, or is transferred subcortically. Thus, the third moment is prepared: the motive answer representing the final behavioural act or its form of expression [10].

The behaviour is conditioned by the native, innate qualities (strength, agility, flexibility) and the ones the dog acquired in its lifetime, possibly as a result of the training [5]. The ambivalent submission-aggression behaviour is genetically influenced (inborn qualities), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, it is intensified and determined by the acquired qualities (training), the preponderant manifestation of a behaviour feature being conditioned and based on their interference [2, 3]. Speaking of something else, mention should be made of the fact that behaviour extremes do not except each other, on the contrary the manifestations of the two conducts overlap, the resultant of the habits of a body depending not only on their genetic dominant character, but also on the qualities acquired in its lifetime (training, bad habit, tic, etc.) [4]. In this respect, one can say that one can prevent the offensive behaviour of the dog at a young age, through specific pre-training and training techniques. This is possible through the act of learning which, under the influence of the external environment, can induce long-term changes in the innate behavioural mechanisms [8]. However, there is an age limit up to which the animal shows such availability, the ability of animals to learn is inversely proportional to their age. Finally it should be said that the animals may

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learn to carry out a particular programme, a sequence of movements, provided they can be entered as a parental model in their genetic structure [1, 5].

### ***Material and working methodology***

The study was conducted on 11 dogs of the Rottweiler breed, age between 6 and 8 months, they were divided into two groups. The first group, consisting of 7 dogs (5 males and 2 females) was prepared in order to defend the public buildings and institutions, the second group, 4 dogs (3 males, 1 female), was meant for the family environment.

The dogs used for training were consulted from a medical point of view (disinfected and vaccinated, a dysplasia test was made on them, their teeth were checked), being able to work and be trained. The dogs were registered with A.C.H.R. and the territorial police station.

Working methods applied to the dogs over a period of two months included different training techniques depending on the aims that were imposed. The training for guard and protection used the motivational method (response reaction to the deliberate action); stimulating the hunting instinct, for this purpose specific working tools being used (a bag with seaweed, sack cloth, string, soft muff) and food as a reward (the dog's reaction to the moving objects) [7]. The techniques of training for entertainment and discipline included stimulation by playing (exploiting the dog's retrieving reflex); food as a reward (stimulating innate reflexes) and stimulating affectivity (development of the master-dog relationship) [9].

The end of the training was marked by the working test, the dogs being asked to guard a person, an object or perimeter decided on in advance (especially for the dogs in the first group), speed of responding to the order, testing the dog's capacity to react and the capacity to fulfil the order whatever the obstacle.

### ***Results and discussions***

After eight months from the end of the training the dogs' behaviour was checked and the following things were noticed: 4 dogs showed the characteristic features acquired during the training (guarding the object and attacking the person), 3 had belated reactions to orders that had been given to them, and 4 had behavioural major deviations, which were conditioned in time – either consciously or unconsciously – by their masters' physiological and nervous features.

Behavioural changes were more obvious with the dogs that had been trained to guard a building (3 cases) than with those for entertainment (1 case).

Guarding an area in a perimeter aimed at starting the attack when the demarcation line was crossed and supporting it until the trespasser leaves the perimeter. Continuing the attack outside the perimeter established before marked the aggressive behaviour in this situation. The failure of the owner or the temporary holder of the dog to fuel the skills acquired by the dog during the training may be the cause of the attack outside the perimeter.

Guarding an object. The aim of this objective was the subject of guarding against possible offenders. In such situations the dog must only react when the object is threatened directly. The aggressive behaviour in this situation refers to the

uncontrolled reaction of the dog without the object being directly threatened. By training a dog, one can remove the expectative condition of the dog that is insufficiently accustomed to this test.

Guarding a person. The purpose of this test relates to the defence of the owner against possible aggressors. The dog must only react after the aggression was committed and it was ordered to attack. The aggressive behaviour in this situation is determined by starting the attack without reason or without being ordered. Applying inappropriate training elements leads to a more aggressive character of the dog.

The ability to fulfil the order regardless of the obstacle. The goal is to determine the dog to observe the order. The dog should not deviate from the order, regardless of the situation created by the aggressor. The aggressive behaviour in this case refers to changing the target of the attack. The owner must have full control of the dog at any time and be aware of his holding a dangerous "weapon", which can be triggered by merely transmitting a state of agitation.

### ***Conclusions***

1. The failure of the owner to fuel the skills acquired by the dog during the training can lead to uncontrolled attack.

2. By training a dog one can remove the expectative condition of the dog that is insufficiently accustomed to the guard and protection service.

3. Applying inappropriate training elements can lead to a more aggressive character of the dog.

4. The owner must have full control of the dog at any time and be aware of his holding a dangerous "weapon", which can be triggered by merely transmitting a state of agitation.

5. Eight months after the end of the training the dogs' behaviour was checked and the following things were noticed: four dogs had the characteristic features acquired during the training (guarding the object and attacking the person), three had belated reactions to the orders that had been given, and four had major behavioural deviations, which were conditioned in time – either consciously or unconsciously – by the physiological and nervous features of the masters.

6. The behavioural changes were more obvious in the dogs trained for watching a building (three subjects) than in the ones for entertainment (one subject).

7. The failure of the owner to fuel the skills acquired by the dog during the training leads to a more aggressive character of the dog by merely transmitting a state of agitation regardless of the conditions that were imposed.

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