

Abstract

- Owner's perceptions of reactivity didn't always correlate with actual reactivity levels.
- Emotional affects may be worse than the reactivity itself.
- Can't give a definite answer for how reactive a dog is but can give a general idea before a consultation.

Introduction

- Reactivity is defined as dogs reacting to a stimuli or certain situations, or from previous causes (Riney, 2023).
- Within the study anything scored at 3 or above on the scale (see figure 2) would be classed as reactive.
- The aim was to validate a reactivity scale for owners and professionals to get to the same level of understanding quickly.
- The objective was to investigate the behavioural indicators and create a psychometric test.

Results

- The owners' perceptions of reactivity show they mostly differed from actual scores (see figure 1).
- There was a great range of answers for each section
- Nobody chose never reactive for any sections
- There was no significant difference between both mild and moderate sections.
- There was a significant difference between the sometimes and the severe sections.
- The mean score for dogs classed by their owners of having high reactivity was 0.8 (n=27)
- The mean score for dogs classed as moderately reactive, sometimes reactive and very mildly reactive was 0.6 (n=29), 0.59 (n=12) and 0.51 (n=7).

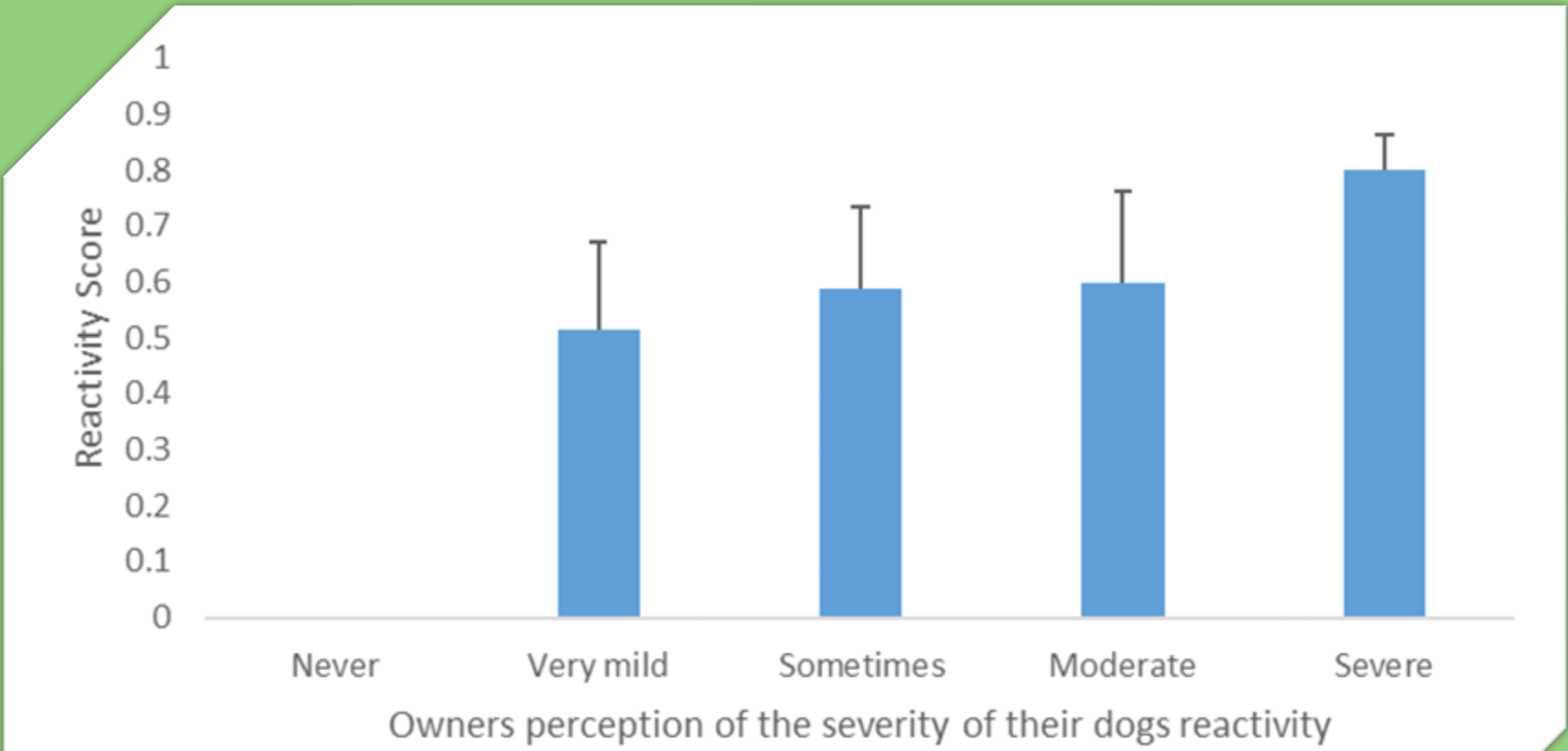


Figure 1 – graph of owner’s perceptions of their dog’s reactivity

Conclusion

- The findings do not support the reliability of the research
- The findings show that reactivity problems don't just affect dogs like previously thought but may actually affect owners more than previously thought.
- Further development of the scale is needed to get a more reliable set of results.

Methodology

- An ethics board had to be completed first to ensure the project was ethical.
- Carried out in the form of an online questionnaire for larger response rate (Taylor-Powell, 1998).
- The questionnaire used the Likert scale to gage opinions and attitudes towards the situation (Croasmun and Ostrom, 2011).
- The questions used important phrases to determine reactivity levels such as lunging, fixated and focus, (see figure 2), to determine how the behaviours differ.
- Examples include how the dog reacts to the stimulus, as well as how they react to the owners when the situations arise.
- Microsoft forms was used to create the questionnaire.
- Distributed over social media using snowball effect and the reactive dog support Facebook group.

Part 2: Other dogs

1. Overall, how reactive is your dog towards other dogs when on a walk?

1	2	3	4	5
Never reactive	Very Mild reactivity (interested but relaxed)	Some signs of reactivity	Moderate reactivity	Severely reactive

2. How fixated does your dog become towards other dogs when they are present on a walk?

1	2	3	4	5
Never becomes fixated and is always responsive to you/the handler	Rarely becomes fixated but is often responsive to you/the handler	Sometimes becomes fixated and is sometimes responsive to you/the handler.	Usually becomes fixated and is not very responsive to you/the handler	Always becomes fixated where they are unresponsive to you/the handler (includes intense staring)

3. Does your dog avoid other dogs on walks?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always

Figure 2, A section of the questionnaire

Discussion

- Professionals may have a better understanding of how the scale works so it might work better from their point of view.
- Every dog has some form of natural reactivity, so this is why nobody chose never.
- Null hypothesis accepted for very mild and moderate and rejected for sometimes and severely reactive.
- Scale and wording may have been confusing for some.
- Very little difference was demonstrated between sometimes, moderately and severe reactivity.
- Terminology may have been confusing for owners which is why results were not as clear and definitive as expected.

References
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