Do Dogs Possess Self-Control?

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Self Control: Do Dogs Have It?
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Introduction

- Each year 6 to 8 million pet dogs enter shelters, 60% of which are euthanized
- Dogs are taken to shelters due to behavioral problems such as aggression, destructive behavior, and separation anxiety
- A strong predictor of negative behavioral problems in humans is self-control (Mischel et al., 1972), therefore we have reason to believe this may be true in dogs
- A potential solution is to find a way to measure self-control in dogs
- Self-control has been measured in Capuchin monkeys using a spinning wheel that made food available after various delays (Bramlett et al., 2012).
- We adapted Bramlett et al.’s methods to test self-control in dogs

Methods

- Participants:
  - 8 dogs varying in breed

References


Results

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Discussion

- Some dogs exhibit self control, while others do not
- Dogs, like humans seem to employ distraction behaviors to facilitate self control (Mischel et al., 1972)
  - Looking away
  - Sticking nose into opening of wheel to push past kibble and get to better tasting treat
  - Laying down
- Further Conditions
  - 15 second delay period
  - In addition, we will change ration of jerky treat along with delay period
    - 1:4 jerky treat ratio with 10 second delay period
    - 1:2 jerky treat ratio with 15 second delay period

Acknowledgements

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