

Foster Field Trips

Austin Animal Center

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Grant amount: This project is part of the Adult Dog Foster Project

Project Summary: This project evaluated whether short-term outings (foster field trips) at Louisville Metro Animal Services improve dog welfare. Dogs that went on field trips showed significant improvement on 15 of 21 measures of behavior, among them increases in playfulness, happiness confidence and relaxation, and decreases in anxiousness, fearfulness and repetitive behavior. Fifty-one dogs were taken on short-term outings lasting about 3 hours during the study.

The objective of the project was:

- To investigate whether short-term outings improve welfare for dogs

Methods:

Fifty-one shelter dogs were taken on short-term outings lasting approximately 3 hours. Before the field trip, shelter staff completed a brief survey assessing dog welfare and behavior. The dog's caregiver completed the same survey while on the field trip; the caregiver was not aware of responses to the initial survey. Survey items were rated on a 5 point scale, with '1' indicating a no or low levels of the item and '5' very high levels of the item. The results of the two questionnaires were compared using Wilcoxon non parametric test.

Results:

Dogs showed significant improvements on 15 of 21 survey items while they were on field trips. Dogs were perceived as more playful, happy, confident, relaxed and less nervous, insecure, anxious, noisy, attention seeking and fearful while they were on field trips.

Conclusions

The results of both questionnaires suggest that dogs may benefit from field trips. It is unknown whether social contact and a change in environment impacts dog behavior or whether people perceive dogs as more positively and less negatively while they are out of the shelter. However, it is important to note that both are important when it comes to finding homes for dogs.

Tags: Foster Care, Foster Field Trips, Shelter Dogs, Fostering

Audience: Shelter/rescue, Executive leadership, veterinary team