



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION FORM
2015 VETERINARY BEHAVIOR SYMPOSIUM
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Abstract

TITLE: Development of a feline behavioral assessment scale to assess anxiety and approachability in unadoptable cats results in increased adoptability in a municipal animal shelter

TEXT (Maximum 500 words unless it is an award application):

Twenty two shelter cats, deemed unadoptable due to anxious behavior and destined for euthanasia participated in a pilot study^a in which their behavior was assessed using the modified Oakland Approachability Scale for Cats¹ (mOASC).

In accordance with standard procedures at an open admission municipal animal shelter^b, these cats were admitted, examined, vaccinated, dewormed and housed in the shelter for the required minimum of 5-7 days and then deemed unadoptable due to behavior based on observation and available history. Upon selection for the study, each cat was moved to a quiet room isolated from the general population. Cats were individually housed in 30" x30" individual stainless steel kennels and provided elevated resting bed, food, water and litter box. A single caretaker provided all daily care. Observations were made by the shelter veterinarian (XXX) daily for 4 days using the mOASC which combines an observation period (1-minute Cat-Stress-Score) and a novel objective scoring evaluation of benign interactions intended to assess fear and approachability to people.

Cats were re-evaluated for adoptability after the study period. Nine cats were euthanized (7 for medical and 2 for behavioral reasons). Surprisingly, 13 of 22 cats were now deemed adoptable and all were successfully adopted during the following three weeks. At this shelter in 2013 (total 3,649 cats) the adoption rate was 10.8%. The high adoption rate (59%) amongst this unlikely subpopulation suggests that participation in this study reduced their anxiety and enhanced the adoptability of these cats.

a. Sponsored by Nutramax Laboratories Veterinary Sciences, Inc. Lancaster, SC
b. XXXX County Animal Shelter, XXXX, XX

1 Umbelino MT, Pereira G, DePorter T. Relação entre cor e mansidão em gatos domésticos. In: *IV Congresso PsiAnimal, 18 e 19 de Outubro 2014*. Sintra, Palácio das Valenças: PsiAnimal; 2014:52–53.

2 Kessler MR and Turner DC 1999b Socialization and stress in cats (*Felis sylvestris catus*) housed singly and in groups in animal shelters. *Animal Welfare* 8: 15-26