

# **Adoption Success with Rehoming Dogs who have a Bite History in North America:**

## **Preliminary Report**

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As euthanasia in North American shelters has declined, animals with behavior problems are being considered for adoption when previously they would not (1). Behavioural euthanasia remains contentious and presents challenges for shelters (2–4) balancing their responsibilities to the animals in their care and the communities they serve. This conundrum is reflected by shelters housing many dogs with long lengths of stay, waiting for adopters who might not realistically exist. This poses welfare risks for dogs (5) and welfare and safety risks for staff. Additionally, adoption of dogs with serious problems can lead to public safety risks and emotional distress to adopters (6).

The objectives of this study are to investigate safety, adopter experience, welfare and post-adoption outcomes for shelter dogs with a bite history prior to adoption. We collected dog demographic, intake and outcome data from a sample of shelters across the USA and Canada, comparing dogs with a bite quarantine during their stay in the shelter to those without. Adopters were surveyed using the previously validated tools, mini-Canine Behavioural Assessment and Research Questionnaire (7) and the Monash Dog Owner Relationship Scale (8). These collected information about aggression post-adoption, human-animal-bond and adopter satisfaction, and quality of life.

Our goal is to measure the impact of placing dogs with bite histories into adoptive homes, giving shelters objective data to consider while making outcome decision-making processes for this challenging population. This research could help support the missions and responsibilities of shelters to enhance the safety and success of adoptions within their communities.

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