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Hot off the Press; Canine Enrichment in a Shelter Environment

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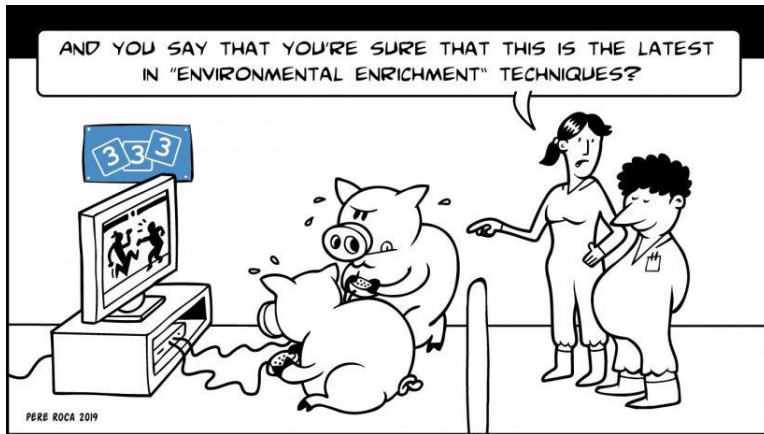


The research

- Do the research! Checking the approach we are looking to take is a valid one.
- This comes in many formats
- Research other organizations
- So, what is the latest scoop on enrichment?



This research paper references over 100 other enrichment papers so useful to explore the subject further



- **Functional Naturalism**, shift in enrichment trends from purely natural elements to incorporating non-natural elements that still encourage natural behaviours.
- *Companion animals* – focus on **species-specific design**, “fostering animal-human interaction” and **welfare**.
- Anthro-centric enrichment limitation, **human senses focus on visual and auditory selections**.
- **Multi-sensory/hybrid designs skew measurements** (I.e. is the chew toy satisfactory because of texture or does colour/smell etc. play a role?).

Understanding the species is crucial to shape our enrichment approach in shelters



- The most significant factor influencing the schedule for provision of different types of enrichment to specific animals was the time taken by animal care staff to complete other husbandry tasks



TABLE 4. Factors influencing the schedule determining when enrichment is provided

	Percentage of responses (<i>n</i> = 235)		
	Often	Some of the time	Never
Time taken by animal care staff to complete other tasks	70.8	25.8	3.4
Responsibility of individual staff members	46.0	37.9	16.1
Formal enrichment calendar or schedule	30.5	33.7	35.7
Identification of abnormal behavior	23.0	60.9	16.0
Availability of volunteers	12.0	40.2	47.8



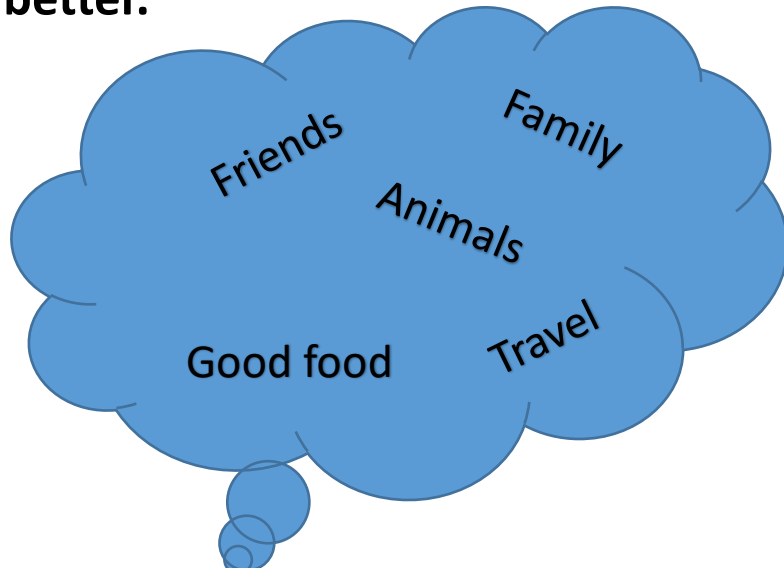
So we must be confident that the effort is worth it!

Why spend time and resources on enrichment?

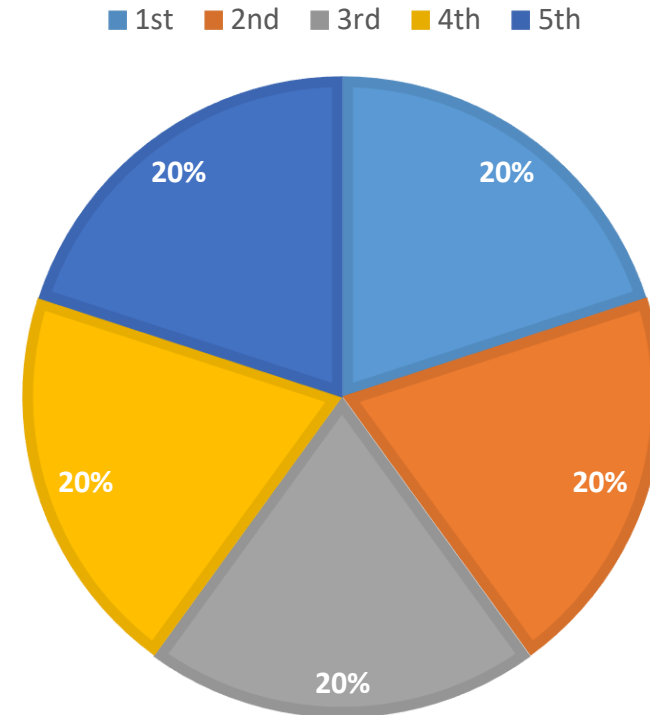


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- I want you to think about what is enriching for you, take a few seconds to list in your head the top 5 things that make your life better.



THINGS THAT MAKE ME HAPPY

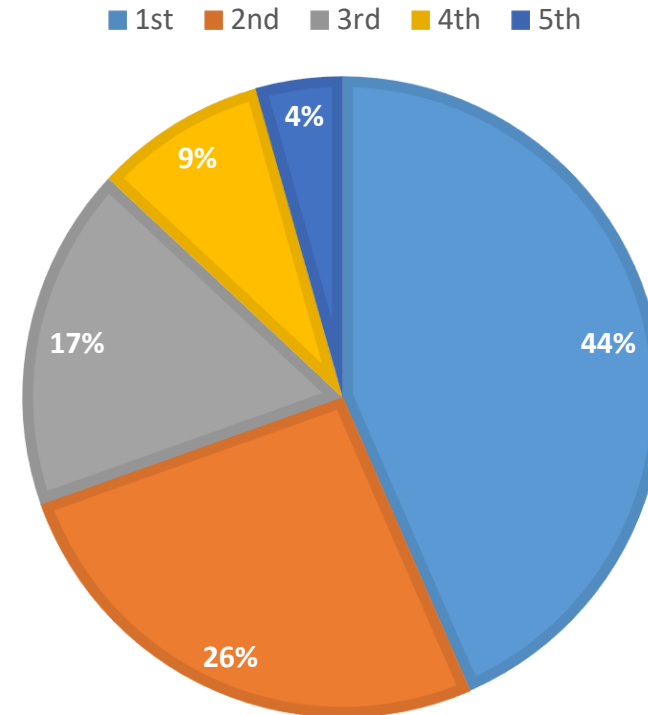




- **Now order them in value, so the top thing that makes your life better is number 1 and the list that goes on below are other things that make you happy**

The things we value varies across us all but has a theme as a species, there are consistencies across the human race that we collectively value and that make our life better. And it shouldn't come as a shock to us that our animals have often very similar things that make their lives better.

THINGS THAT MAKE ME HAPPY



Know the species you care for



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Freedom to explore?
Choices?
Control?
Safety?



So what does a dog lose when they come into our shelters?



We have a good understanding of the 5 freedoms, the welfare needs the things that a dog perceives of value. We also know that they are individuals and preferences will differ from dog to dog.



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SHARING
LEARNING
INSPIRING

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When I ask people at this conference why do you come to ICAWC the majority say because I want to make a difference, I want to learn, to share ideas, to make the lives of the animals I care for better. And when I ask those same people how does it make you feel when you achieve this? The answer is “amazing” “fantastic” “fulfilled” So lets not underestimate the power of enrichment, how do our volunteers feel when they see a dog enjoying life even if only for a few moments a day?

So we know we want to enrich our dog’s lives but how do we get to the point where we have the capacity to actually achieve this?

The importance of planning

- Times are often hard in the world of animal welfare
- Planning beyond getting the next delivery of food for the animals is sometimes hard to consider
- Even talking about expanding what you currently do can seem crazy
- This is why I have always felt this conference is so important
- Don't leave this conference without a plan to connect with someone from another organisation



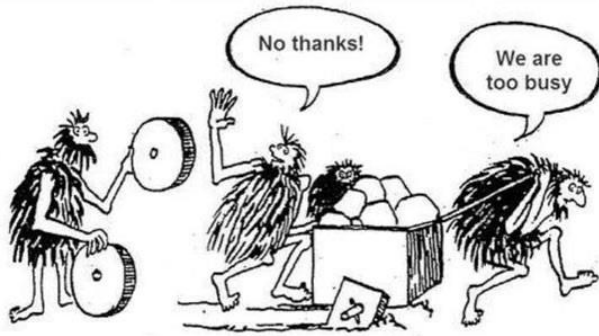
Thirty Years Later: Enrichment Practices for Captive Mammals

Julia M. Hoy, Peter J. Murray, and Andrew Tribe School of Animal Studies, The University of Queensland, Gatton Campus, Queensland, Australia 2010



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Would More Enrichment be Provided if it was Manageable? When requested to indicate their level of agreement with the statement: “More enrichment would be provided to mammals if it was manageable”, 42.1% of respondents (n 5 233) “Strongly agreed”, 42.1% “Agreed”, 13.3% were “Neutral”, and 2.6% “Disagreed”.



As with many things in animal welfare, change is difficult and rarely happens quickly, The team at Animal Rescue Sofia have been on a journey for many years and have worked to get to a point where this is now possible but still with many challenges.

It's all about the numbers 2012



With this group size enrichment is incredibly hard to achieve, so the plan needs to consider group size and going from this to



This shelter housed 500 dogs in large groups and lack of time and awareness of individual needs increased the difficulty to enrich their lives and adopt dogs with confidence about their behaviour

2018

We held a workshop at the shelter and dog numbers were around 220, Nadia and Svetlo asked me what I thought the correct numbers for a shelter of this size. Depends on staff/volunteer numbers and how much enrichment you would like to do in the kennels themselves. I suggested a figure of less than 150 would be optimal





Improving areas to train
and have fun 2022



- Currently there are around 120 dogs in the shelter and the adoption numbers have gone up not down so more dogs are being helped not less.
- It is not just the physical changes at a shelter that are important to enable improvements in enrichment activities
- Good staff/volunteer knowledge and awareness increases the potential for raised standards of care



So, if there is no current capacity what next?

- Build capacity?
- Plan for next year not next week
- Create a specific program and gather your resources
- Consider an event that brings people together at one time
- Draft schools, clubs and businesses to help create enrichment activities or to help develop areas of the shelter into enrichment focused areas

Making a plan



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When people see the impact that enrichment can have on just one dog there is a movement within the people who care for the dogs, they see the value and strive to expand the positive change to others in the shelter.

Group living challenges – aim is to reduce group sizes

Space – not all space should house dogs

Time – prioritising enrichment and training for adoption

Capacity for care – understanding what number is right for your shelter to ensure activities beyond the feeding and cleaning can occur

Enrichment ambassador – have someone take the lead in your organisation to drive this forward



Dodo

Case Study



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Dodo

“ I was so proud of what Dodo achieved in the 4 days we were together”

2 of my team attended Animal Rescue Sofia earlier this year to deliver a workshop

When I asked Phil, pictured here with Dodo how he feels when he sees this picture he said “ Just so proud of him “



Understanding the starting point



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So what's the plan?

We know that Dodo really struggles in his kennel and when alone in his compound, he paces and circles continuously and worse when noise levels in the shelter increase.

Well we have already done one of the most important things when considering enriching life. We all just did it a few moments ago! We identified the things that are enriching, so make a list maybe a top 5. Things like food, sleep, feeling safe, and social interaction.

He loved food of course but actually the human interaction was very rewarding for him, they found that high value food was often too over arousing for him, so by understanding preferences and value of certain food items they overcame this issue by using lower value food when training him.



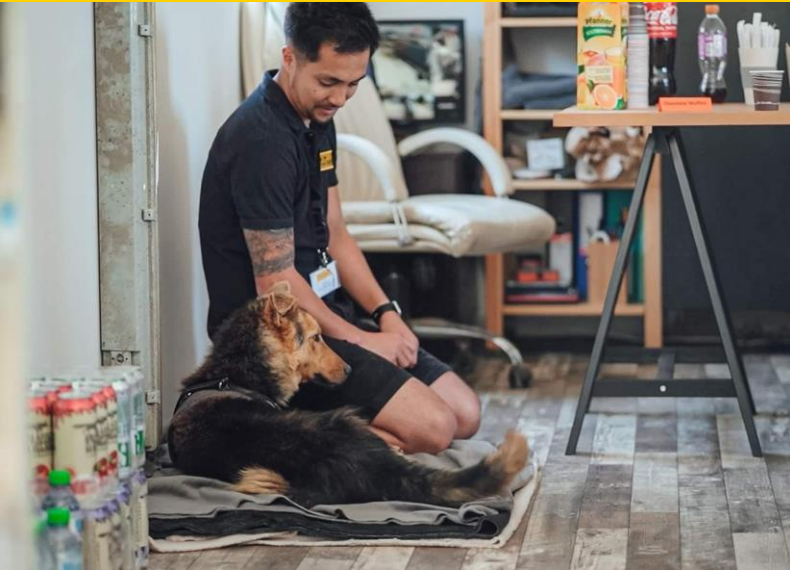
The aim was to have him able to settle whilst the teaching of the workshop was being carried out so before the workshop began Phil would spend time with him in the room and reward his settled behaviour. This preparation was time well spent as he was then able to join the group for the teaching sessions.

Having Dodo in the room whilst they delivered the sessions worked brilliantly. They used a settle mat and whoever was not delivering the presentation would then do some settle training with Dodo.

Bringing Dodo inside with everyone



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Another reason it worked so well is because the workshop covered topics such as dog body language, how dogs learn, enrichment and stereotypical behaviours. Dodo was a real life case study which the delegates could observe and witness all the science and theory in practice.

His outdoor compound was directly outside of this room – so when he wasn't in the room with us the delegates could (sadly) see Dodo pacing in his compound. This contrast worked brilliantly because a lot of them could not believe it was the same dog!

Taking part in training demos



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Because they had prepared Dodo and were therefore confident he would do well in the classroom, he took part in a lot of their practical demos

During enrichment sessions they talked about the different categories of enrichment:

- Social
- Cognitive
- Food
- Sensory



Just look at that focus!

Enjoying food enrichment



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Here he is enjoying a kong on his settle mat whilst Phil and Clara were teaching!

Dodo's happy face



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By day 3, they had built up to him being able to self settle on the mat, and the rate of reinforcement (the gap between food rewards) became much greater.

It was an aim to have him fall asleep on his settle mat during a session, however, they knew that in 4 days this might not happen...



Asleep in the training room



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But it did !!!





Not all dogs show their struggles so openly and dogs that may spend much of the day inactive or not engaged with either their human carers or their doggy friends, may also be struggling with their situation.

I have to say a huge well done to Eva the trainer at Animal Rescue Sofia who has worked so hard not just with Dodo but so many of the dogs that may struggle with the shelter environment and that having someone with her skillset and knowledge is a huge step forward to be able to create and maintain good enrichment practices

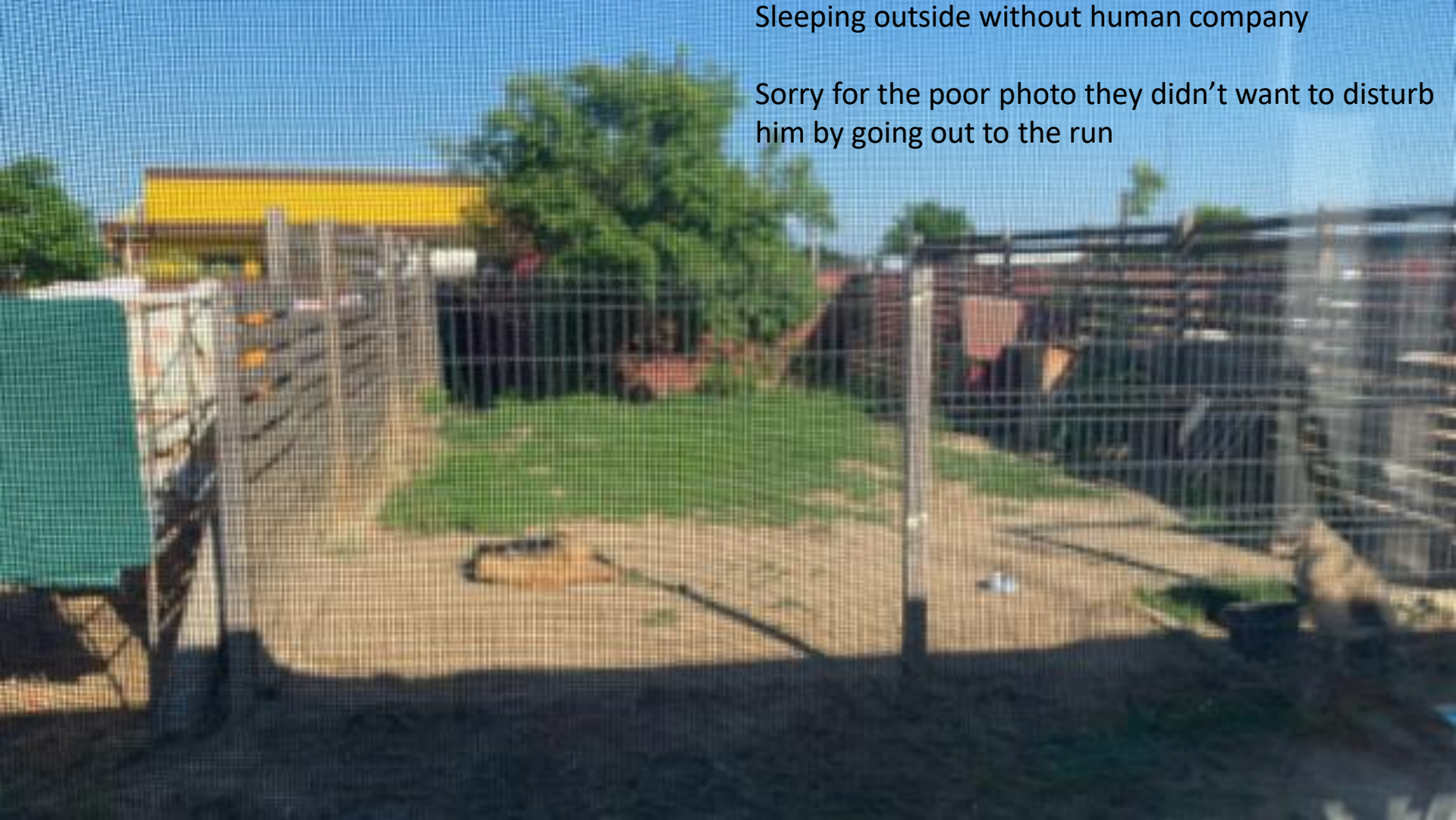


Asleep in the training room



Sleeping outside without human company

Sorry for the poor photo they didn't want to disturb him by going out to the run



I would love to see a talk at ICAWC in the future from an organisation that plants the tree today and comes back to show how much it has grown in their organisation.

Lets plant an enrichment tree
together today

**The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago the second
best time is today.** (Harry Eckman ICAWC2022)



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Thank you to all who
attended the conference
and my team who
continue to work with
other organizations to
share, learn and inspire

