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CANINE COMFORT TO FELINE FEAR

Examining the Confidence Disparity in Veterinary Nurses' Handling of Canine and Feline Patients

University Centre Reaseheath

University Centre Reaseheath Bsc (Hons) Veterinary Nursing Dissertation Research Project

Previous Research has reported...

- Since the COVID-19 Pandemic, there has been a 47% increase in dog bites to humans, and a rise in behavioural issues *(Boardman & Farnworth, 2022; Gray, 2020; O'Hara, 2024)*.
- Studies report that the last 20 years have demonstrated a rise in human hospitalisations resulting from dog bite injuries across England, Wales and Republic of Ireland *(Owczarczak-Garstecka et al., 2024; E. Ryan et al., 2023; Tulloch et al., 2021)*.
- Euthanasia relating to behavioural issues has also been increasing *(Mota-Rojas et al., 2023; Pegram et al., 2021)*
- Less than one third of first opinion practices offer behavioural consultations *(Golden & Hanlon, 2018)*, and many veterinary surgeons feel reluctant to discuss behavioural issues with clients *(Hevern, 2022)*.
- Many veterinary professionals have reported unsubstantial education and training in behaviour as explanations for their reluctance or lack of confidence *(Golden & Hanlon, 2018; Hevern, 2022; Hill, 2023)*.

Statistics

44% Had training in force-free methods of handling feline patients

12% Had experience working in dog-friendly clinics

Of Surveyed Nurses...

78% Had worked in a Cat Friendly Clinic of Bronze accreditation or above

28% Had undergone force-free methods of handling canine patients!

Aims

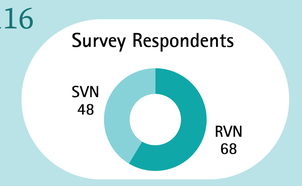
To examine if UK Veterinary Nurses felt more confident at handling and assessing the behaviour of cats or dogs and why this may occur

To investigate if route of qualification had an impact on confidence in handling or assessment of behaviour

Methodology

The study consisted of a descriptive, cross sectional survey where participants were required to answer questions surrounding confidence, behaviour, handling and their background. The questions surrounding behaviour in the survey were in regards to assessing behaviour for the purposes of handling. They were rated their confidence on ascale of 1 to 10. This survey was distributed to both Registered Veterinary Nurses and Students. Total Study n = 116

Statistical Analysis was carried out in RStudio, using a variety of inferential and descriptive statistics. Kruskal Wallis test and Mann Whitney U tests were utilised in the analysis of data.

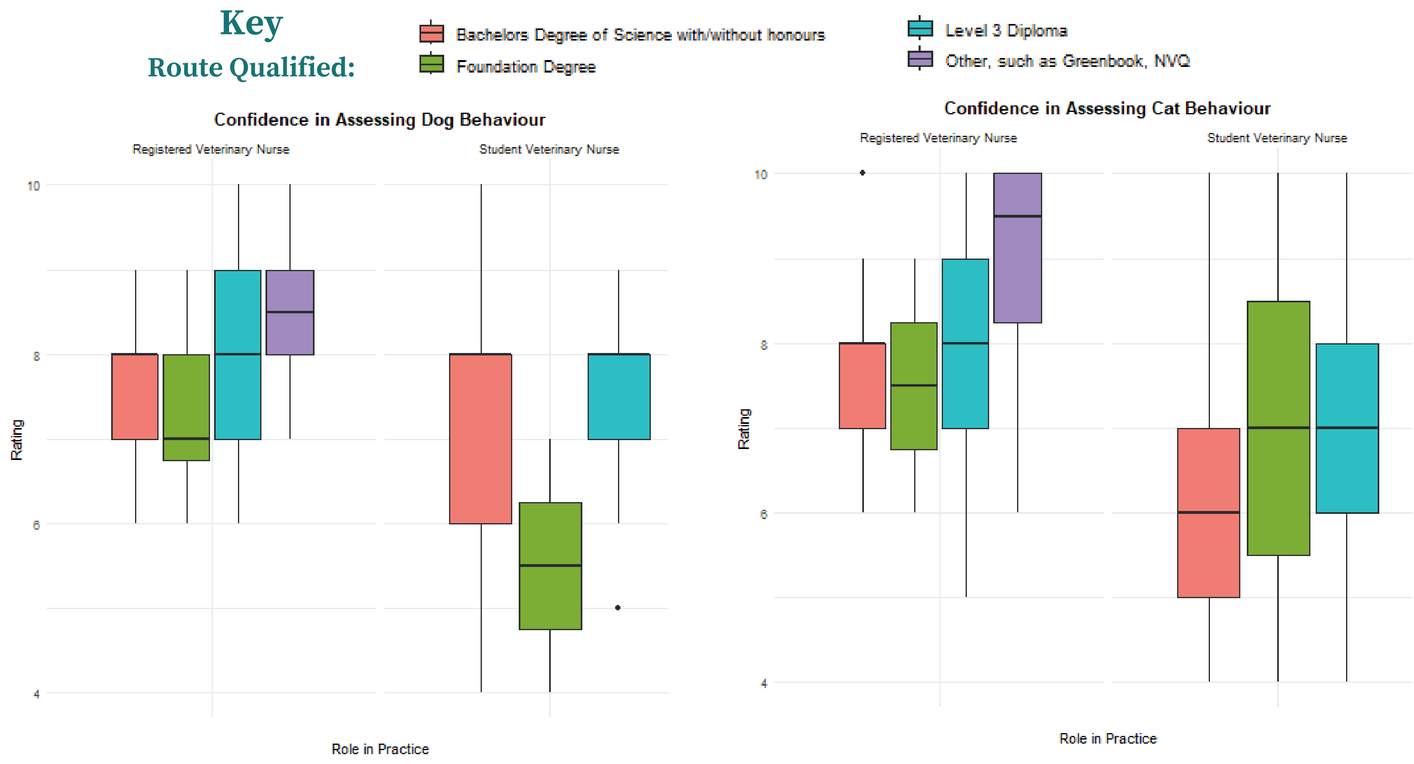


Results and Discussion

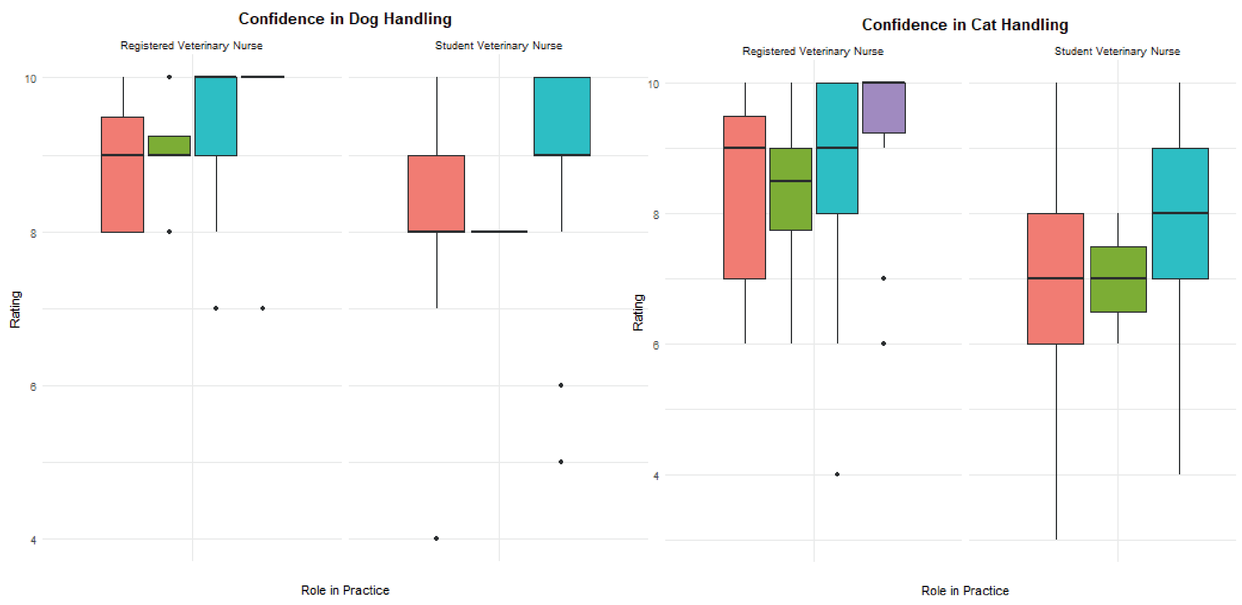
There was found to be no significant difference between nurses' confidence in assessing behaviour of either species (p = 0.09). However nurses were found to be more confident in handling dogs than they were in cats (p = < 0.01)

Confidence in handling cats was significantly higher than confidence in assessing their behaviour (p = <0.01).

Confidence in handling for both species was rated higher than confidence in understanding behaviour



A positive correlation was found between confidence in handling and confidence in assessment of behaviour for both species. RVNs had more confidence and competence than SVNs, and 'Other' Nurses were consistently rating higher than nurses in separate categories. These findings may be linked to time in practice, and supported by studies by Dunne et al (2020), White & Fontaine (2024) and Hill (2023).



There was not a significant effect of the route of qualification on the confidence in assessing the behaviour of canine patients (p = 0.12).

Route of qualification did significantly impact confidence in both handling cats (p = 0.01) and dogs (p = <0.001) and assessing behaviour for cats (p= 0.02).

RVNs who had qualified through 'Other, NVQ, Greenbook' were consistently scoring higher than their counterparts, possibly linking to greater time in practice due to NVQ last being awarded in 2013.

Both Registered and Student Veterinary nurses that had opted for the Level 3 Diploma typically gave higher scores, while both types of degree students were usually lower-scoring, which can support findings in White & Fontaine (2024).

Key Points

- Nurses were found to be **more confident** at **handling of dogs** than they were of cats.
- Route of qualification impacted **confidence in handling** both species
- Route of qualification did **impact confidence in assessment of behaviour in cats,** however it **did not impact this in dogs**
- Nurses qualified through 'Greenbook, NVQ or Other' were consistently scoring higher in all categories
- Diploma students were found to be generally more confident than degree students in behaviour and handling

Sources

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