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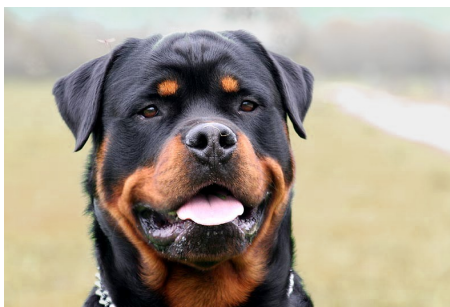
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AGGRESSION TOWARD PEOPLE BY ROTTWEILER DOGS

BACKGROUND

Several serious aggressive encounters towards people by rottweiler breed dogs have been reported in recent years in Finland. To investigate mechanisms behind this, we studied personality traits and types of aggression of rottweilers with an online questionnaire directed to dog owners.



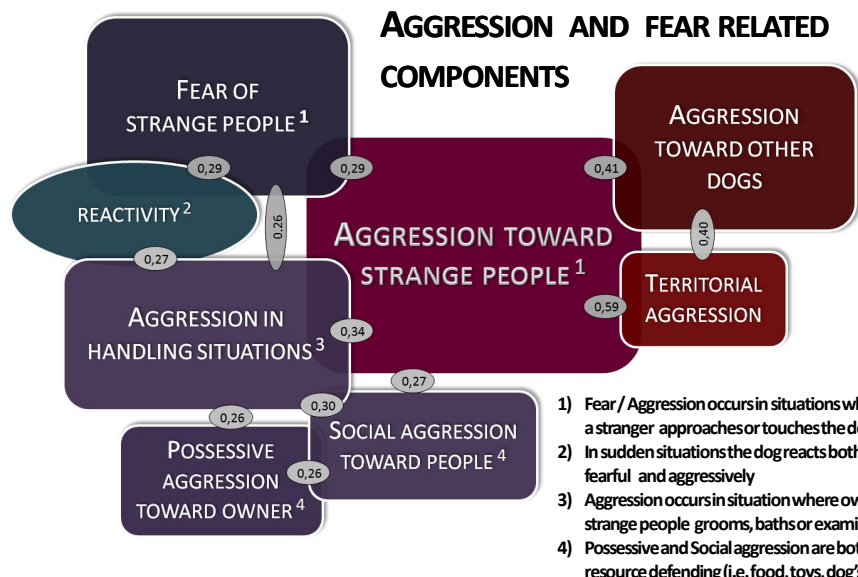
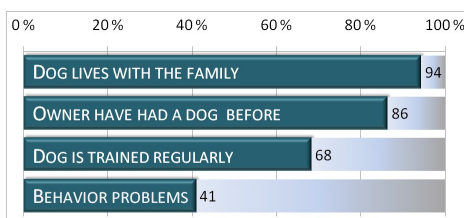
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The rottweilers are a powerful breed with well developed guarding instincts. According to the breed standard, the rottweiler is basically a calm, confident and courageous self-assured dog with great alertness. Rottweilers have strong willingness to work and they are suitable as a service and working dogs.

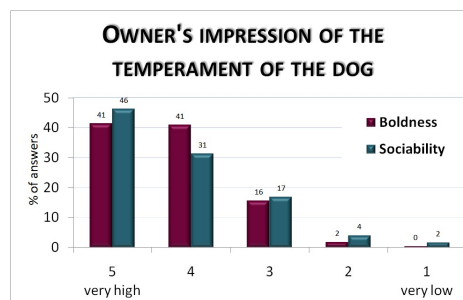
QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire consisted of 110 questions of which 102 focused on the dogs' behaviour in everyday situations and 8 questions on the owner impressions of the temperament of the dog. All questions were answered on a five-point scale (1 = no reaction, 5 = strong or frequent reaction).

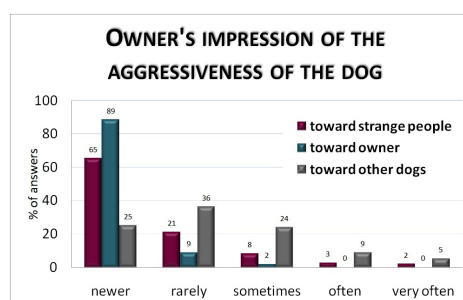
544 replies were received, of which 514 dogs more than 2 years old were selected to the final analysis. The data were analyzed by principal component analysis with promax rotation which allows for correlation between the components. Correlations between different components were calculated with Spearman's correlation.



- 1) Fear / Aggression occurs in situations where a stranger approaches or touches the dog
- 2) In sudden situations the dog reacts both fearful and aggressively
- 3) Aggression occurs in situation where owner or strange people grooms, baths or examines the dog
- 4) Possessive and Social aggression are both related to resource defending (i.e. food, toys, dog's bed).



Finnish dog owners consider the boldness and sociability of their dogs are relatively high [ABOVE]. The aggressive behaviour toward strange people or owner is rare [BELOW].



BEHAVIOUR TRAITS

In principal component analysis we extracted 14 different components (Eigenvalue > 1,5), including aggression towards strange people, fear of strange people, aggression in handling situations, aggression against strange dogs, excitability, social aggression towards people, sensitivity, playfulness, aggression towards owner, fear of noises, separation anxiety, emotional reactivity, territorial aggression and attention seeking behaviour.

AGGRESSION TOWARD STRANGE PEOPLE correlated significantly with several other components, such as with territorial aggression ($r=0.587$, $p<0.01$), fear of strange people ($r=0.291$, $p<0.01$), aggression in handling situations ($r=0.337$, $p<0.01$), social aggression toward people ($r=0.267$, $p<0.01$) and aggression against strange dogs ($r=0.411$, $p<0.01$).

All aggression related components, except on territorial aggression, correlated with the fear related components or included fear related items.

CONCLUSIONS

We concluded that aggression toward people by rottweiler dogs is strongly motivated by fear, and the defensive characteristic of the breed.

[LEFT] Most of the respondents are experienced dog-owners who keep their rottweilers as a companion and sporting dogs. 41 % of the owners reported their dogs have some behavioural problems.