



International Journal of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry



ISSN: 2456-2912
NAAS Rating (2026): 4.61
VET 2026; SP-11(6): 13-17
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www.veterinarypaper.com
Received: x-03-2026
Accepted: x-04-2026

Usha S
Department of Livestock
Production Management, VCRI,
Theni, TANUVAS, Chennai,
Tamil Nadu, India

Mahesh T
Department of Animal
Nutrition, Madras Veterinary
College, TANUVAS, Chennai,
Tamil Nadu, India

N Muthusamy
Department of Livestock
Production Management, VCRI,
Theni, TANUVAS, Chennai,
Tamil Nadu, India

Corresponding Author:
Usha S
Department of Livestock
Production Management, VCRI,
Theni, TANUVAS, Chennai,
Tamil Nadu, India

A study on management practices of rearing pet dogs adopted by veterinarians of Tamil Nadu

Usha S, Mahesh T and N Muthusamy

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.22271/veterinary.2026.v11.i6Sa.3316>

Abstract

The practice of rearing dogs in India is growing rapidly. The study was conducted to assess the management practices of dogs owned by veterinarians of Tamil Nadu. The data was collected through questionnaire, direct interview and through phone call from veterinarians. The total sample size of 162 pet dog owners was selected randomly. The results revealed that the majority of the veterinarians have dogs either for companionship (68%) or guarding (31%). Mostly of them non-descript dogs were mostly adopted (44%) or purchased (36%) foreign breeds. 78% of the dogs were housed in and around the house of owner and 21% were housed in the farm premises. 83% of the dogs were kept free roaming. The always chained dogs were mostly in rural areas in farm reared for guarding purpose. Feeding frequency is mostly twice (48%) or thrice (43%) a day. 30% of the dogs were not given any milk products and 7% of the dogs were maintained on vegetarian diet. Majority of dog owners 83% feed their dog with home-made food. The dogs in rural areas that are aggressive were not dewormed or vaccinated. Among them (70%) of the veterinarians don't allow their dogs for mating. Almost 86% of the animals were not sterilised. The guard dogs in farm are poorly maintained and few are chained always which is discouraged.

Keywords: Dog, management, veterinarians, Tamil Nadu

Introduction

Dog was the first mammal to be domesticated by humans thousands of years ago. Among various reasons for domestication, the prime reason is companionship. Dogs also thrive in the human environment by scavenging (Zhang *et al.*, 2020) [1]. Now it is estimated that world dog population is around 1 billion (Bryce, 2021) [2]. According to BAHS 2025, the dog population in India is 9.43 million. At present there are only 5 registered native dog breeds in India, namely, Rajapalayam, Chippiparai, Mudhol Hound, Gaddi, Changkhi. There is huge population of non-descript breeds and foreign breeds population in India. Dog population either as companion animal or guarding animal is rapidly growing in India. The management practices of rearing dogs is not so ethical and scientific. The welfare of animal is compromised most of the times. This survey was conducted to give insights on management practices by the veterinarians.

Materials and methods

The study was carried out among veterinarians across Tamil Nadu. The data was collected through questionnaire, direct interview and through phone call from 162 veterinarians. The data of breed, sex and age of the animal, housing, feeding, breeding, health care and animal identification were collected. The data was tabulated and frequency was calculated as per standard statistical methods. The data collected were statistically analysed for frequency and percentage and finally, the rankings were given based on it.



Table 1: Rearing practices adopted by dog owners of veterinarians of Tamil Nadu

Pet Details		
Category	Sub-category	Percentage (%)
Purpose of rearing dog	Companionship	68
	Guarding	31
	Shepherding	0
	Guiding	1
	Others	0
Source of the dog	Adoption from street	44
	Purchase	36
	Gift from someone	20
	Others	0
Breed	Non-descript	78
	Indian breed	7
	Foreign breed	15

Age of the animal	Less than 6 months	10
	6-12 months	15
	1-2 years	26
	More than 2 years	49
Sex of the animal	Male	70
	Female	30
No. of dogs reared	1	78
	2	13
	3	0
	More than 3	9
Any other species reared	None	52
	Cat	7
	Cattle/Buffalo	17
	Sheep/Goat	7
	Poultry	17
	Others	0
Microchipping status	Done	10
	Not done	90

Table 2: Housing management adopted by dog owners of veterinarians of Tamil Nadu

Category	Sub-category	Percentage (%)
Area of residence	Rural	63
	Semi-urban	10
	Urban	27
Place of housing	Inside the human house	43
	Around human house premises	35
	Farm	21
	Others	1
Type of housing	Free roaming inside the human house	42
	Free roaming outside the human house	41
	Cage house	1
	Chained	16
Chaining of dog	Always	6
	Only while taking outside	38
	During day time	22
	Never	32
	Others	2

Table 3: Feeding management adopted by dog owners of veterinarians of Tamil Nadu

Category	Sub-category	Percentage (%)
Feeding frequency	Once a day	9
	Twice a day	48
	Thrice a day	43
	Others	0
Milk/products	Not given	30
	Only milk	11
	Milk + curd	54
	Only curd	3
	Others	2
Meat products	Yes	93
	No	7
Type of meat	Chicken only	53
	Mutton/Chevon only	7
	Chicken/Mutton/Chevon	36
	Beef	1
	Pork	2
	Others (All including fish)	1
Type of feed given	Home-made food made for humans	52
	Home-made food exclusive for dog	31
	Commercial feed	15
	Commercial + home-made food	2
Treats	Not given	35
	Human snacks	32
	Dog treats	27
	Both	6
Feed supplements	Given	28
	Not given	72
Type of feeder	Stainless steel	77

	Aluminium	17
	Plastic	5
	Stone/Cement	1
	Ad libitum	83
Watering frequency	Once a day	2
	2-4 times a day	9
	More than 4 times a day	6
Type of waterer	Stainless steel	68
	Aluminium	15
	Plastic	11
	Stone/Cement	6

Table 4: Breeding management adopted by dog owners of veterinarians of Tamil Nadu

Category	Sub-category	Percentage (%)
Birth control surgery	Not done	64
	Will do in future	22
	Done	14
Mating	Will be allowed	30
	Will not be allowed	70

Table 5: Health management adopted by dog owners of veterinarians of Tamil Nadu

Category	Sub-category	Percentage (%)
Frequency of cleaning dog's place	Daily	38
	Alternate days	30
	Twice a week	17
	Occasional	10
	Never	5
Type of chemical used to clean the floor	None (Dry cleaning)	6
	None (only with water)	54
	Phenol	17
	Commercial floor cleaner	22
	Others	1
Bathing frequency	Never	5
	Twice a week	25
	Once a week	48
	Occasional	22
Deworming	Never	7
	Done regularly	63
	Done irregularly	30
Anti-rabies vaccination	Never	6
	Done regularly	75
	Done irregularly	19
Handling of dog	Easy to handle	96
	Aggressive	24
Physical activity	No physical activity	20
	Light work	43
	Medium work	33
	Heavy work	4

The respondents were mostly from rural (63%) area of residence. The majority of the veterinarians have dogs either for companionship (68%) or guarding (31%). Mostly they have either adopted (44%) or purchased (36%) the animal. Among them, non-descript dogs were mostly adopted and foreign breeds were mostly purchased. Almost (70%) of the veterinarians preferred to have male dogs. Majority of owners (78%) only one dog and 48% were reared with other species like cattle, sheep and goat. Among them (96%) of the dogs were easy to handle and microchipping was done in dogs in Chennai district were alone.

Most of the dogs (78%) were housed in and around the house of owner and (21%) were housed in the farm premises where 83% of the dogs were kept free roaming and mostly chained only while taking them out. The always chained dogs were mostly in rural areas in farm reared for guarding

purpose. In contrary, Selvakkumar (2021) reported that most of the Rajapalayam dog owners (89.58 per cent) maintain their dog with an individual shelter provision inside their house and (72.92 per cent) of the dog shelter is having concrete cement floor. Also Hedge *et al* (2009) [5] in Akola city of Vidarbha region in Maharashtra reported that majority of the dog owners kept their dog in a separate house.

Most of the dog breeders did not prepare any special food for their dogs/pets. The food was preparing for their home use has been share with dogs. Only very few commercial dog breeders provide small quantity of commercially available branded dog food. Majority of the dog owners fed their dogs with non-vegetarian food (93 p%) for home-made food prepared for humans (52%) and milk and curd ((54%) mostly twice (48%) or thrice (43%) a day. There are 32% of the veterinarians who fed their dog with human snacks and aware of the list of items that are toxic to dogs. The vegetarian diet given dogs were supplemented with micronutrients. Water was made ad libitum by mostly. Stainless steel containers were used mostly for both feeding and watering. 68% cleaned the dog's place daily or on alternate days. The results of the present study are in similar with Selvakkumar, (2021) and Sawaimul *et al.*, (2009) [6]. The results of the present study are in contrast with Hedge *et al* (2009) [5] who reported that majority of dog owners (89%) offered mix feed (Veg and Non-veg) 3 to 4 times in a day.

The dogs in rural areas that are aggressive were not dewormed or vaccinated. In urban areas the dog owners are well aware about vaccination and deworming schedule (48%) of the dog were bathed weekly once and (60%) chemicals were not used for cleaning. In this survey it was observed that (75%) the dogs vaccinate regularly against Anti-Rabies vaccine. The deworming is being practiced regularly (65%) and remaining only during the free health or vaccination campaign organized by the state animal husbandry department or by local voluntary organizations. Majority (70%) of the veterinarians don't allow their dogs for mating. 86% of the animals were not sterilised. The results of the present study in-terms of Anti-rabies vaccination are in agreement with finding of Sawaimul *et al.*, 2009 [6]. In this study, management practices of dogs reared in urban area were similar to Athilakshmy *et al.*, (2020) [4].

Conclusion

The survey conducted in Tamil Nadu revealed that dogs are primarily reared for companionship and farm guarding. However, welfare concerns such as continuous chaining and inadequate management practices were observed, which may negatively affect the physical and mental well-being of dogs and increase the risk of human-animal conflicts. Therefore, improving dog owners' knowledge of scientific dog rearing, welfare-friendly housing, nutrition, healthcare, and behaviour management is essential. Extension and awareness programs should be implemented to promote responsible dog

ownership. Further, a nationwide survey across India is recommended to understand regional variations in dog rearing practices and welfare issues, enabling the development of evidence-based policies and targeted interventions for improved canine welfare.

Conflict of Interest

Not available.

Financial Support

Not available.

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How to Cite This Article

Usha S, Mahesh T, Muthusamy N. A study on management practices of rearing pet dogs adopted by veterinarians of Tamil Nadu. *International Journal of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry.* 2026;SP-11(6):13-17.

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