

Case log example

Rocko, a 4-year-old, 20-kg, male neutered American bulldog, was presented for biting both of his owners when reached for, petted, or when they tried to remove his blanket. He had not been to any formal obedience training and didn't respond to the owner's verbal commands. He lived in a house with two adult owners with no children. The first sign of aggression was at 8 months old when the owners took Rocko to visit a relative with two dogs. Rocko was not well socialized and didn't get along well with the other dogs. He stayed on the couch, curled in a ball for most of the visit. When the owner went to put his leash on, he snapped at her. The owners generally yelled at him or smacked him across the face with an open hand when he showed aggression. The aggression had continued to worsen over the years. Rocko was also fearful of storms and loud noises. He refused to walk outside on storm days. In the examination room, Rocko often faced away from the owners, yet when the female owner left the room, he went to the door and whined the entire time that she was gone. He was not responsive at all to the owners' commands. Often, when they asked him to do something like "come," he averted his gaze and froze. He was fearful during his physical examination, but was not aggressive. The physical examination was within normal limits. Rocko was diagnosed with conflict-related aggression, noise fear, and storm fear. The owners were sent home with a DVD (Canine Behavior: Observing and Interpreting Canine Body Postures, by S Hetts, DQ Estep, D Grant) illustrating canine body language so that they could read Rocko's warning signs and avoid bites. Because Rocko's behavior was predictable and avoidable, no medication or supplements were prescribed. The owner was told to avoid pushing or pulling him, cease all punishment, institute a program of sit for all interactions, keep him off the furniture, and avoid interactions with children. She was also told to teach the dog to leave it, come, sit, watch, and off using positive reinforcement techniques so that he could be moved without confrontation. Finally, they were to create a safe spot for him for use during thunderstorms and fireworks. In 2 weeks, the owners reported that Rocko had not shown aggression. They understood how to read his body language and they noticed that he was stressed a lot of the time, but especially on storm days. At his recheck appointment after 4 weeks, Rocko was visibly less stressed in the examination room. He was interactive with the owners and did not orient away from them as much. He was more responsive to commands but not as much as was necessary to control him. The owners were told to continue with the current plan for life, enroll in a positive reinforcement obedience class to build a positive working relationship with Rocko, and to use a storm CD to counter condition him to the sounds that were making him fearful. In 6 months, Rocko continued to do well as long as the owners followed the treatment plan.

(Landsberg et al., 2013)

Some useful readings to fill out the case log

- Heath, S. (2018). Understanding feline emotions and their role in problem behaviours. *Journal of feline medicine and surgery*, 20(5), 437-444.
- Mills, D. S. (2017). Perspectives on assessing the emotional behavior of animals with behavior problems. *Current opinion in behavioral sciences*, 16, 66-72.
- de Assis, L. S., Matos, R., Pike, T. W., Burman, O. H., & Mills, D. S. (2020). Developing diagnostic frameworks in veterinary behavioral medicine: Disambiguating separation related problems in dogs. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 6, 499.