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Do Dogs Possess Self-Control?

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Self Control: Do Dogs Have It?

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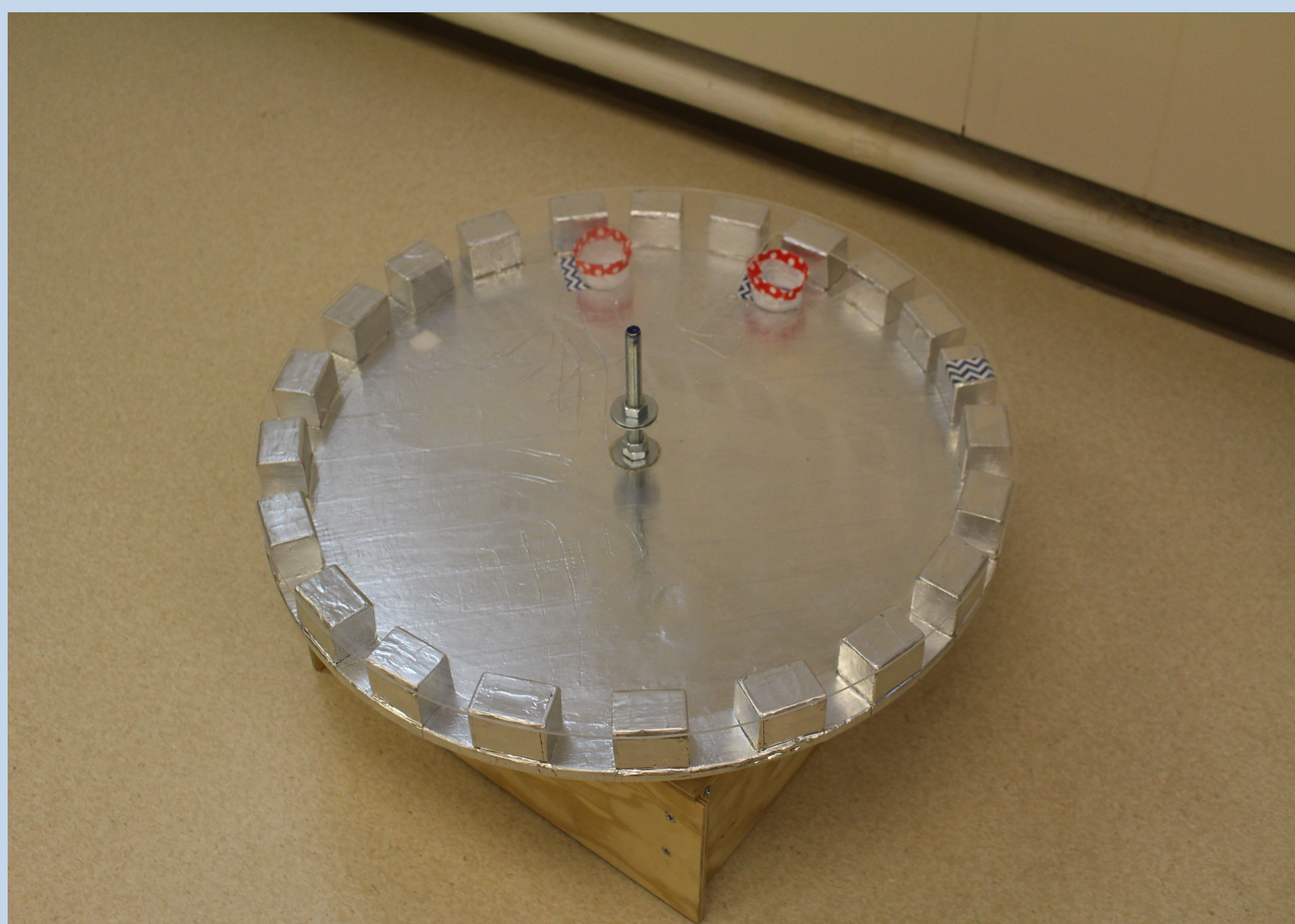


Introduction

- Each year 6 to 8 million pet dogs enter shelters, 60% of which are euthanized
- Dogs are taken to shelters due to behavioral problems such as aggression, destructive behavior, and separation anxiety
- A strong predictor of negative behavioral problems in humans is self-control (Mischel et al., 1972), therefore we have reason to believe this may be true in dogs
- A potential solution is to find a way to measure self-control in dogs
- Self-control has been measured in Capuchin monkeys using a spinning wheel that made food available after various delays (Bramlett et al., 2012).
- We adapted Bramlett et al.'s methods to test self-control in dogs

Methods

- Participants:
 - 8 dogs varying in breed



References

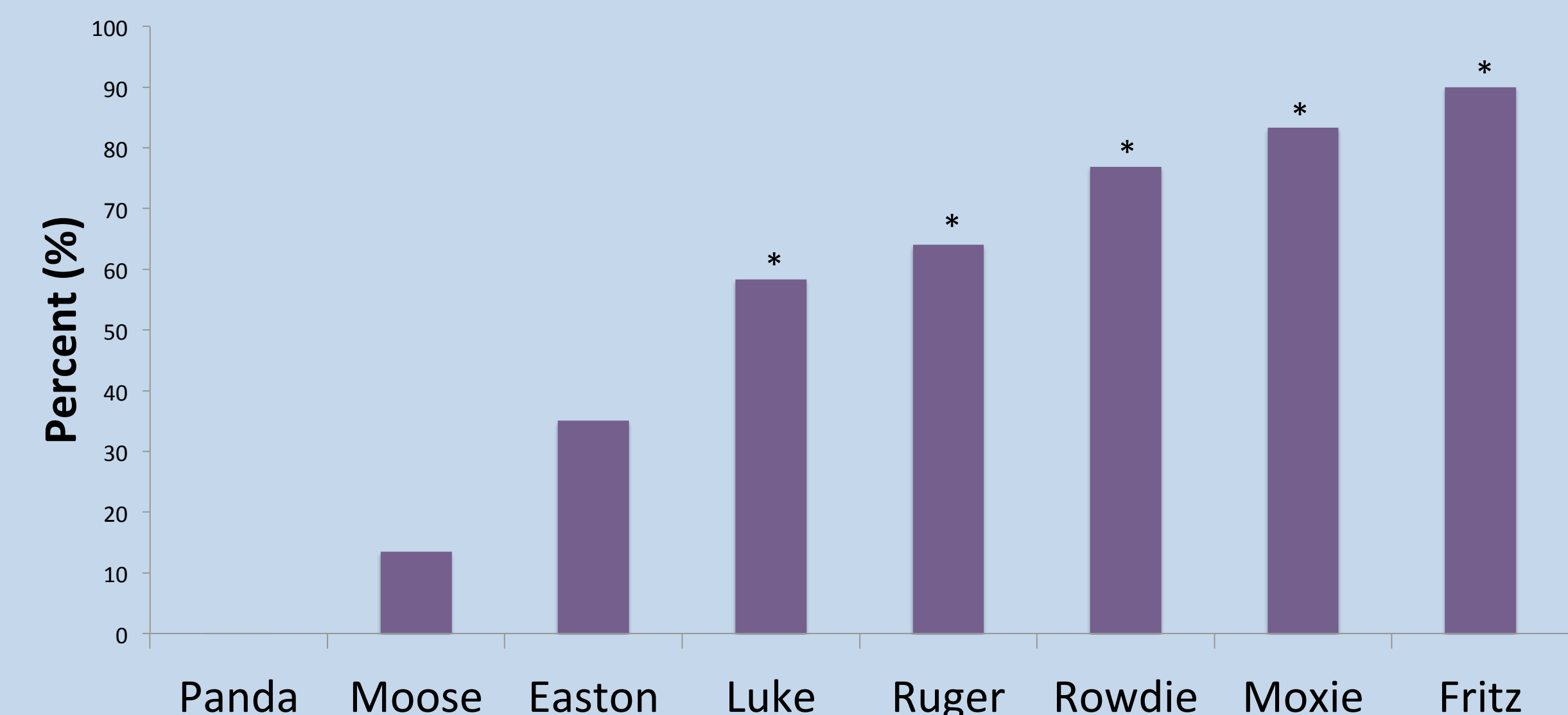
- Bramlett, J. L., Perdue, B. M., Evans, T. A., & Beran, M. J. (2012). Capuchin monkeys (*Cebus apella*) let lesser rewards pass them by to get better rewards. *Animal cognition*, 15(5), 963-969.
- Mischel, W., Ebbesen, E. B., & Raskoff Zeiss, A. (1972). Cognitive and attentional mechanisms in delay of gratification. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 21(2), 204.

Results

Percent of Trials Waited Each Session

	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6	Session 7	Session 8
Panda	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%			
Moose	12.50%	50%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Easton	0%	100%	40%	50%	0%	25%	0%	0%
Luke	0%	75%	87.50%	25%	75%	100%		
Ruger	37.50%	100%	75.00%	100%	25%	100%		
Rowdie	66.70%	50%	50.00%	100%				
Moxie	75%	100%	75%					
Fritz	87.50%	100.00%	100%	75%				

Overall Percent of Trials Waited



* Performance significantly different from chance suggesting self-control, $p < 0.05$

Discussion

- Some dogs exhibit self control, while others do not
- Dogs, like humans seem to employ distraction behaviors to facilitate self control (Mischel et al., 1972)
 - Looking away
 - Sticking nose into opening of wheel to push past kibble and get to better tasting treat
 - Laying down
- Further Conditions
 - 15 second delay period
 - In addition, we will change ration of jerky treat along with delay period
 - 1:4 jerky treat ratio with 10 second delay period
 - 1:2 jerky treat ratio with 15 second delay period

Acknowledgements

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