

SAFER Canine Assessment Webinar Series

Part One Canine Assessment: SAFER Overview and Research

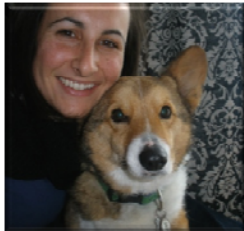


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Your Chat Moderators



Shannon Gramann

Senior Manager, Shelter R&D
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Director,
Applied Research and Behavior
ASPCA

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SAFER Canine Assessment Webinar Series

Part One Canine Assessment: SAFER Overview and Research



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Emily Weiss, PhD, CAAB

Vice President of Shelter Research
and Development
ASPCA



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Overview



- What is an aggression assessment?
- Understanding probability
- Overview of SAFER
- The original research that “seeded” SAFER
- Other assessment research
- SAFER is just one piece of the behavioral profile

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Identify Aggression

Aggression – encompasses a range of behaviors that usually begins with warnings and can culminate in an attack.

ASPCA SAFER™
(*Safety Assessment to
Evaluate Re-homing*)
identifies potential
aggression



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Why Was SAFER Developed?



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The words we use matter.....

Temperament Test

- Temperament is a mental or physical character that is regarded as innate, rather than learned.
- Test implies a pass/fail system

Aggression Assessment

- SAFER is an aggression assessment
- The outcome informs you about resources/support for the dog

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ASPCA SAFER™ Assessment

Snapshot of current behavior with a narrow lens on aggression

Score (1-5) reveals:

- resources needed for placement
- probability of aggression



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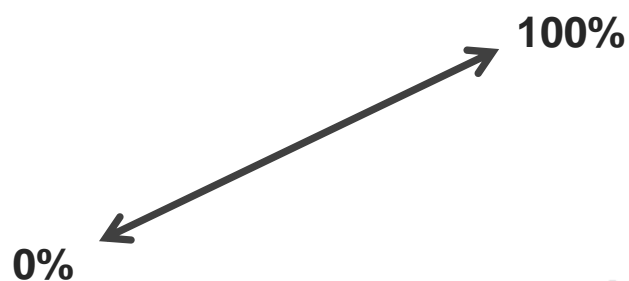
Probability

The chance that a given event will occur

- Rain, test scores, struck by lightning

No absolutes: 0-100%

Spectrum of behavior



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SAFER and Probability of Biting

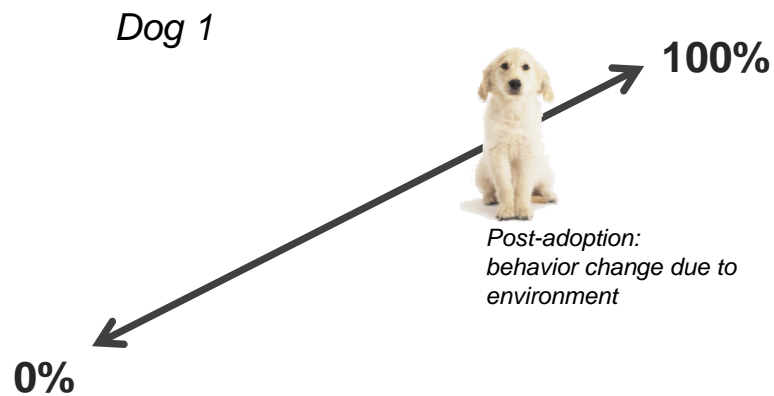


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SAFER and Probability of Biting

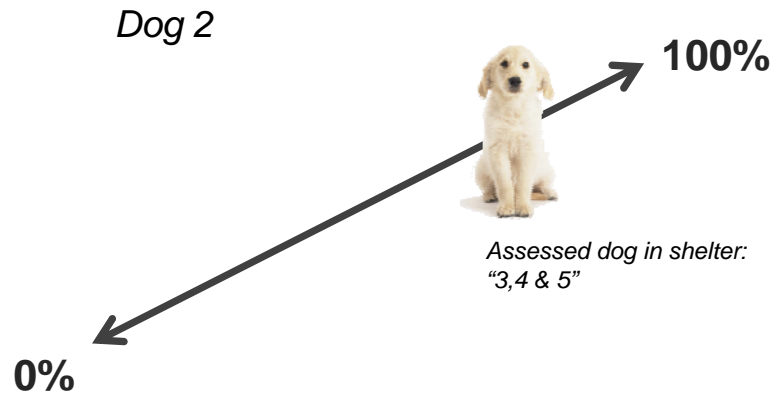


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SAFER and Probability of Biting

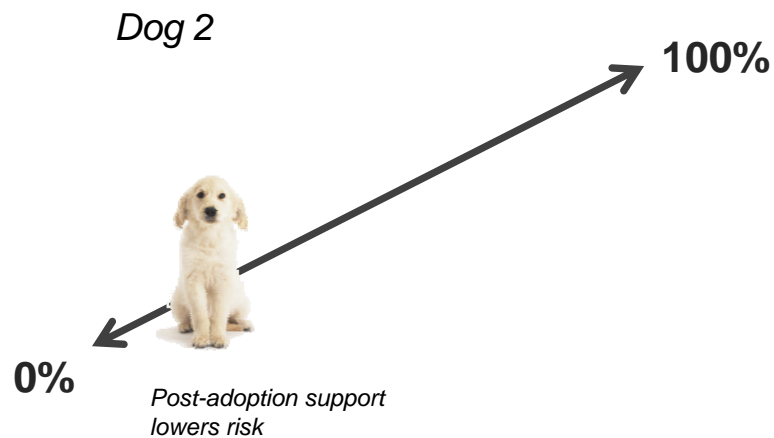


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SAFER and Probability of Biting



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ASPCA SAFER™

- Requires 2 people, 10 minutes, helper dog & video camera
- Probability of aggression: focus on body language
- Certification Process



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ASPCA SAFER™

- 7 items (Look, Sensitivity, Tag, Squeeze, Food, Toy and Dog-to-Dog Approach)
 - Insight to response to a stranger looking at their face, touching collar, body, paws, how they respond when aroused, resource guarding issues & dog behavior when on-leash.
 - See videos of each item on ASPCApro.org/safer



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Details of Scoring (Part 3 of this series)

scoring:

	Dog lifts head and ceases eating when you reach to pull the bowl away or push him out. [Enter "1"]
	Dog calmly allows the food to be moved, follows the dish, but does not interfere with the dish's movement. Dog's body is soft and loose, eyes soft, tail neutral. He lifts his head when hand is pushed against his cheek. [Enter "1"]
	Dog follows the dish with his tail down, body likely a bit stiff. Dog lifts head after a bit of pressure from hand to cheek. [Enter "2"]
	Dog follows the dish, his tail between his legs, ears are forward. His body is stiff. Dog does not lift his head from the bowl when hand is applied to his cheek. [Enter "3"]
	Dog gulps food, begins to eat faster and with bigger bites, body stiff. He does not lift head when hand is applied to cheek. [Enter "3"]
	Dog freezes and/or growls. [Enter "4"]
	Dog tries to bite. (Use chart on the worksheet to identify level of bite attempt/bite.) [Enter "5"]

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Choice

- Give choice when assessing
 - Pulling head away during Look
 - Allowing movement on 6 ft leash during Tag
- Choice allows for accurate assessment
 - Limit choice=any dog aggress
- Upcoming webinar (Part 3 of SAFER series) will discuss choice in greater detail

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Who can assess?

- Physically fit, ability to bend and kneel
- Knowledgeable in canine body language
- Ability to observe behavior changes objectively
- Awareness of your own body language and handling of leash



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How is SAFER used?

Part of placement profile

- Adoption
- Rescue
- Foster

Intake tool

Prevention breed bans

Private consults

Any situation where you want to gather more info



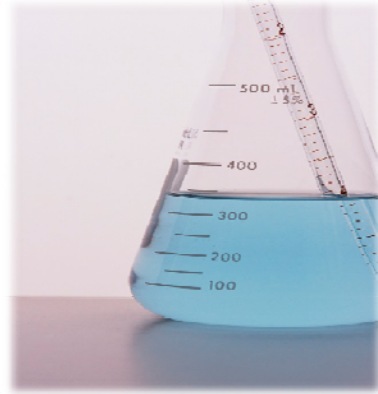
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Research

An endeavor to discover new or collate old facts by the scientific study of a subject or by a course of critical investigation.



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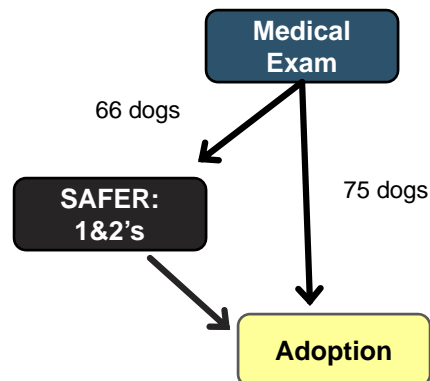
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Where did SAFER come from?

KHS: service dog selection tool: “seeds”

- 141 dogs at surrender: randomized 2 groups



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Research

Dogs moved to adoption
Phone survey 2 weeks post adoption
(n=92)
Standardized survey: focus on behavior



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Adopted dogs

Behavior	Assessed	No Assessment
Nipping	4	14
Food Aggression	1	5
Toy Aggression	2	5
Growl at human	1	10
total	8	34

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Other results

- Of the dogs euthanized before adoption:
 - Health: 8
 - Space: 7
 - Behavior: 12 (8 were not assessed)
- LOS (length of stay) is longer for dogs scoring 4 & 5 and shorter for dogs scoring 1 & 2

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Publications

- Weiss, Emily. Selecting shelter dogs for service dog training Journal of Applied Animal Behavior Science 5:1 43-62 (2002)
- Weiss, Emily. Service dog selection tests: effectiveness for dogs from animal shelters Journal of Applied Animal Behavior Science 53:4, 297-308 (1997)

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Riverside County Dept of Animal Services (CA)

100 dogs placed into adoption, 2 groups
(assessed/not assessed)

Behavior	Assessed	Not Assessed
Growl at human	1	14
Bit Human	1	7
Bit Human/Broke skin	0	2

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Other Research

Rescue Waggin' Transport Program

- 14 source shelters brought ASPCA SAFER™ assessed dogs to Wisconsin Humane Society
- Re-assessed by certified staff (new location by different people 2-3 days after arrival)
- 3,000 dogs: scores varied by 3%



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SAFER at Surrender

Wisconsin Humane Society

Dogs assessed at intake from owner in lobby

Conversation with owner

After intake, re-assessed dogs 2-3 days later

- 85% of 50 dogs re-assessed the same score



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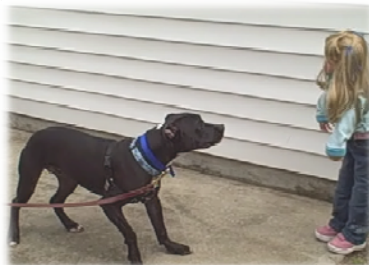
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Other Research

Currently evaluating methods to use:

- toddler doll to assess arousal and aggression to children
- stuffed life-sized dog to determine level of dog aggression



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Gather Information

Aggression assessment is just one piece of the puzzle to guide “live outcome”

The Assessment should be a platform to develop strategies to increase live release opportunities for each individual

Animal Control reports, surrender form, behavior team, other assessments, medical eval, staff & volunteer interactions, potential adopters, foster...



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One example: Heidi

Call previous owner when necessary to gather more info.



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Using SAFER

Outcomes will vary with staff, season, empty kennels, etc

Utilize other resources to increase live releases

- Foster
- Rescue
- Volunteer ambassadors



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SAFER can increase live release!

- Decrease length of stay
- Decrease in euthanasia
- Decrease returns
- Increase adoptions



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Summary



ASPCA SAFER™:

- Identifies potential aggression in dogs
- Informs a behavior modification plan & those moving to foster or rescue
- Facilitates transparency between for adopters and placing with rescue groups
- One piece of the puzzle that guides live outcomes for dogs

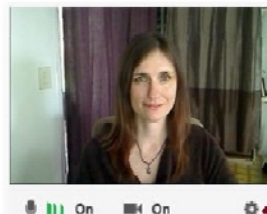
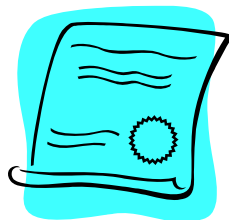
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Get SAFER Certified!

- Ensures assessment is consistent and used as designed
- Learn more about certification and web-based SAFER coaching
- Attend the last webinar of this SAFER series on 12/19



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For questions regarding SAFER,
certification, or coaching please email:

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