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Housing conditions of breeding animals: profiling of canine and feline facilities in southwest France

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INTRODUCTION

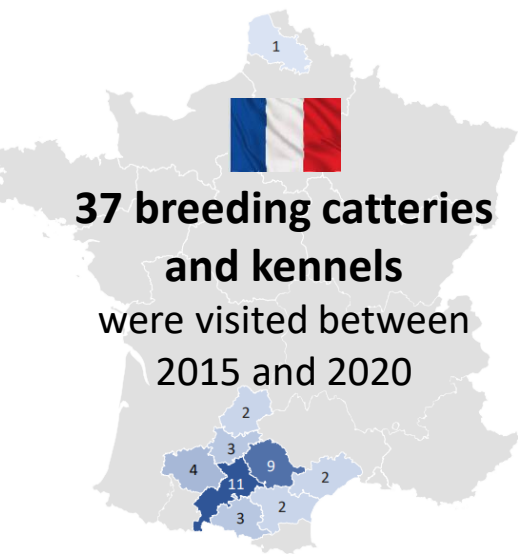
- New regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats in breeding establishments since December 2023 [1].
- Little is known about the actual housing conditions of cats and dogs used for breeding in Europe.



Aim

To determine and characterize the profiles of canine and feline breeding facilities in Southwest France.

MATERIAL AND METHOD



Visits of the facilities



Standardized questionnaire



Statistical analyses

61 variables describing: architecture, housing conditions, management

Multiple correspondence analysis (MCA)

Agglomerative hierarchical clustering (AHC)

RESULTS

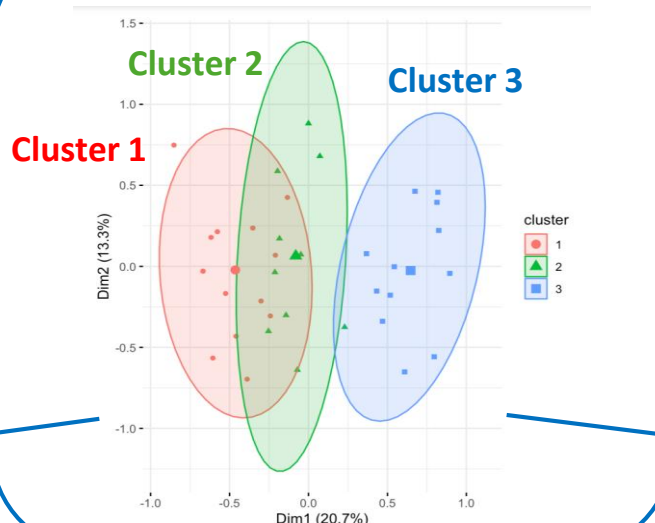
There are 3 distinct clusters of feline and canine facilities in the Southwest of France

17 (IQR: 9-30) was the medium number of adult animals per facility.

97% (36/37) of breeders had a separate whelping room in their facility.

76% (28/36) had a separate weaning room.

AHC of the 3 clusters of facilities

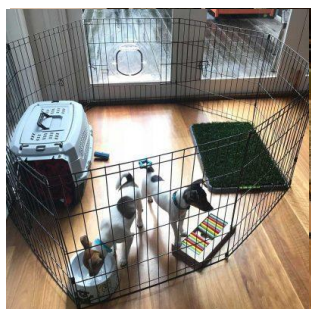


32% (12/37) only of the facilities had an infirmary for sick animals.

35% (13/37) had a quarantine area for new arrivals.

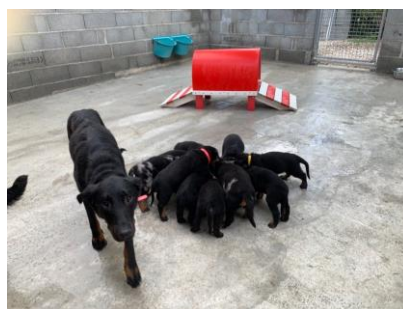
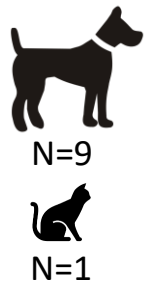
Cluster 1 – mixed

- Canine breeders only
- Premises specifically dedicated to breeding
- Some other premises used also for private reasons (12/15)
- Often (14/15) additional dog-related activity (e.g. boarding kennel) was present
- The majority (12/15) did not have quarantine or infirmary



Cluster 2 – professional

- Mostly canine breeders
- Facility exclusively dedicated to breeding
- Outdoor space was generally (8/10) provided to animals for their relaxation and socialization
- Almost no possibility to wash hands on-site
- Additional activity variable



Cluster 3 – family

- Mostly feline breeders
- Premises were not dedicated to breeding activity (11/12; housing entirely at home)
- No outdoor areas were available in their facilities (9/12)
- No other on-site activities were done in this cluster (12/12)



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the diversity in housing conditions for breeding dogs and cats across different facilities. Unfortunately, the separation of healthy animals from sick ones or new arrivals remains challenging in most facilities, posing biosecurity risks. Increased involvement of veterinarians in facility management, including regular inspections, could provide valuable guidance to dog and cat breeders and enhance the well-being and health of the housed animals.



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References :
[1] https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/animal-welfare-practice/welfare-dogs-and-cats_en