

Study: Barking causes stress in dogs

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U.S. veterinary scientists say the overwhelming noise of barking at the nation's animal shelters causes problems for both shelter employees and the dogs.

"While employees may wear hearing protectors, dogs don't have that option," said Crista Coppola, an adjunct veterinary medicine instructor at the University of Illinois. "Excessive noise in shelters can physically stress dogs and lead to behavioral, physiological and anatomical responses."

Coppola and colleagues R. Mark Enns and Temple Grandin, both at Colorado State University, studied noise measurements made at an animal shelter built in 1999.

"Noise levels regularly exceeded the measuring capacity of our noise dosimeter, which was 118.9 decibels," said Coppola. "These levels were higher than that produced by a jackhammer (110 decibels)."

A common noise problem in shelters occurs when dogs are placed in gated kennels along the perimeter of a large room.

"Dogs are a very social species," Coppola said. "They want to be around other dogs. When they see other dogs, but can't get to them, you hear a lot of frustration barking back and forth."

The research is detailed in the spring issue of the Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science.

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