

Adopting a better attitude towards shelter dogs

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In Australia, dogs are an integral part of the modern lifestyle yet many people appear reluctant to adopt pre-loved animals due to perceived behavioural or health related issues.

A new study is shedding light on why many shelter dogs are unable to find new homes in Australia, despite their popularity as companion animals.

The continued euthanasia of thousands of shelter dogs who fail to be rehomed each year despite being healthy and behaviorally suitable has prompted a new study to determine [public attitudes](#) towards 'pre-loved' canines and whether members of the public are well-informed about

current shelter practices.

In a study detailed in the journal *Anthrozoos*, researchers from Monash University, the Animal Welfare Science Centre and the Anthrozoology Research Group, surveyed 1647 Australians investigating public beliefs about and attitudes towards shelter dogs with a focus on perceptions about the adoptability assessment processes and other common shelter practices.

The majority of the respondents indicated a strong likelihood of adopting a future pet dog from an animal shelter or rescue organisation. However, more than 30 per cent believed adult shelter dogs often had [behavioural problems](#).

Lead researcher and animal behaviourist, Kate Mornement, from Monash University's School of Psychology and Psychiatry, said 40 per cent of Australians own dogs, but despite their popularity as [companion animals](#), millions of unwanted, abandoned and stray dogs enter the welfare shelter system worldwide every year.

"The continued [euthanasia](#) of thousands of shelter dogs who are healthy and behaviorally suitable for rehoming is a social issue of great interest to animal welfare groups, policy-makers, and dog lovers worldwide," Ms Mornement said.

"In Australia, dogs are an integral part of the modern lifestyle yet many people appear reluctant to adopt 'pre-loved' animals due to perceived behavioural or health related issues.

"These findings may be used to rectify misconceptions about how shelter dogs are assessed or screened prior to adoptions and inform future strategies to increase the number of shelter dogs adopted."

Ms Mornement said low cost training and rehabilitation programs to improve shelter dog behavior, increase adoptability, and enhance public perceptions of shelter dogs could also be implemented.

In other findings, more than 30 per cent had a strong or moderate preference for a puppy that was matched by an equal preference for an adult dog.

Provided by Monash University

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