

POS -04

Characteristics and Challenges of Dog Keeping in the Federal University of Technology Owerri Community, Owerri, Imo State

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Abstract

In Nigeria, dog keeping is gradually transiting from the traditional to modern organized forms in which the dogs are cherished as pets or utility animals. A survey of dog keepers within the Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO) was carried out to determine the food sources, system of feeding and common commercial food brands patronized by the dog keepers. About 5 - 10% FUTO households kept dogs at a mean number 2.7 dogs per household. Breed distribution was 22% local breed, 32% exotic and 46% cross of local and exotic breeds. The major challenges faced by keepers were poor access to veterinary care (33%), cost and availability of quality dog food 25 % each. The major food ingredients used in feeding the dogs were rice, common beans, garri, noodles, and corn, while bones and meat were used as supplements, with only 28% feeding commercial pet food brands. However four commercial dog food brands accounted for 90% of dog food served to the dogs. Most of the values are within the normal range published by regulatory authorities. The essential ingredients used in formulating the commercial dog foods were cereal grains supplemented with chicken, meat, and their by-products. The major constraints to feeding dogs with commercial dog foods included limited finance (50%), inadequate time (17%), loss of appetite (14%), and food material rejection (11%), etc. There is therefore the need to formulate dog foods from locally available resources.

Keywords: Dog food, pets, utility animals, FUTO

Introduction

In Nigeria, dog keeping is gradually transiting from the traditional scavenging systems to modern organized forms in which the dogs are cherished as pets or utility animals. In the traditional scavenging system, feed resources can vary from human domestic food wastes to human faeces and local nondescript breeds are used (Eluemuno, 2017). Modern systems use select local breeds, pure exotic and crosses (Local x Exotic) lines of various degree. The exact population of the dogs in Nigeria is not known (Aiyedun and Olugasa, 2012a) nor is record of their feed resources. Most studies on dogs in Nigeria have centered on their role in transmission of rabies and other related zoonoses (Omudu et al., 2010; Aiyedun and Oluagasa, 2012b). Adequate knowledge of their feed resources is very important considering the rapidly evolving ecological niche they occupy and the socioeconomic roles these dogs play in recent times.

This work was therefore designed to determine the constraints faced by dog keepers in FUTO community. The information generated will be used to design appropriate strategies towards providing adequate food and enhancing the welfare of these pet animals.

Materials and Methods

A purposive survey using oral and written questionnaires was administered to dog keepers (staff and students) within the Federal University of Technology, Owerri. Information was fielded on the breed and number of dogs kept, major challenges faced (feed resources, housing, veterinary care, fund, etc), feeding system (scavenging, homemade food, food leftovers and commercial pet foods), feed resources and commercial brands used. Data was also collected from dog feed vendors on common dog food brands and the label ingredient and proximate composition of these brands.

Data generated were analyzed with descriptive statistics such as means, charts, etc.

Results

Results (Figure 1) showed that about 5 to 10% of households in the FUTO community kept dogs and the mean number of dogs in each household was 2.7. Also, 22% of the dogs were of local breed, 32% were seemingly exotic, while 46% were crosses between local and exotic breeds. The major challenges faced by keepers were found to be the cost of veterinary care (33%), while the cost and availability of good quality feed

pooled 25% each, indicating that feed related problems controlled 50% of the challenges faced by dog keepers. Another 49% of the respondents depended principally on homemade food containing mixtures of some common household food items. The major food ingredients used were rice, common beans, garri, noodles, and corn, while bones and meat were used as supplements. Again, 28% of respondents depended largely on commercial pet food brands, while 20% fed their dogs principally from the foods left after domestic consumption. Only 3% of these keepers allowed their dogs to scavenge.

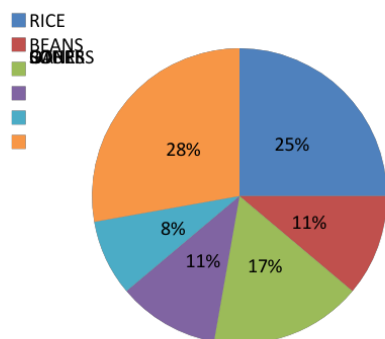


Figure 1: Common ingredients used in homemade dog foods

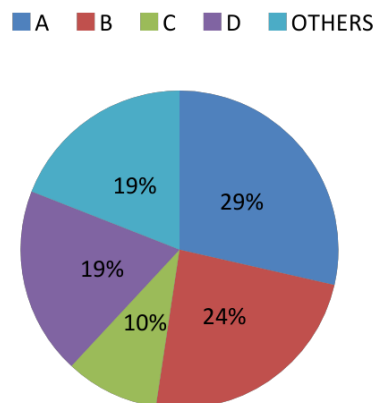


Figure 2: Distribution of dog food brands

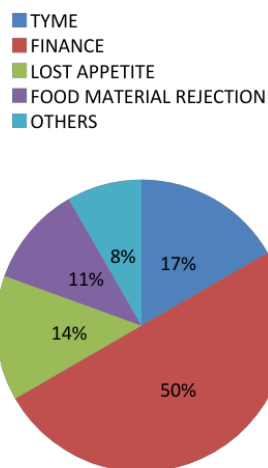


Figure 3: Challenges facing adequate dog feeding

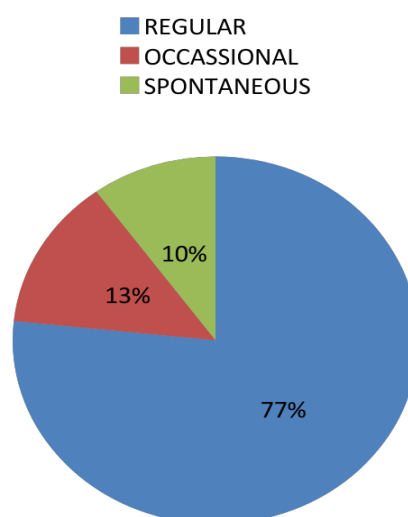


Figure 4: Feeding pattern among dog keepers in FUTU

This result shows an increased awareness of the importance of proper nutrition for dogs and in turn a higher value placed on them in recent times. Four commercial dog food brands accounted for over 90% of dog food trade in the study location. Only one brand was produced locally (in Nigeria) and controlled only 19% of patronage. Invariably, 77% of respondents maintained regular feeding schedule for their dogs while 13% feed spontaneously depending on need or food availability. The major problem faced by these respondents in feeding their dogs was poor finance (50%). Others included inadequate time (17%), loss of appetite (14%), and food material rejection (11%), etc.

The proximate composition reported on the commercial food brands is shown in Table 1. Most of the values are within the normal range published by NRC (1974). The essential ingredients used in these commercial dog foods were cereal grain supplemented with chicken, meat, and their by-products.

Table 4.3: Proximate composition (%) of commercial dog food brands sold in Owerri

Dog Food Brands	CP	EE	Ash	CF	MC	Ca	P
A	21.00	8.00	9.50	4.50	-	-	-
B	26.00	18.00	-	3.00	10.00	1.00	0.8.0
C	31.00	20.00	-	3.00	10.00	1.20	1.00
D	21.00	8.5.0	6.00	5.00	8.00	1.00	0.8.0
RANGE (all)	21 – 33	7 – 20	6.0 – 9.5	2 – 8	8 – 12	1.0 – 1.6	0.80 – 1.10
MEAN (all)	25.36	12.68	7.88	4.05	10.00	1.28	0.9

CP - Crude protein, EE – Ether extract, CF – Crude fibre, MC – Moisture content, Ca – Calcium, P – Available phosphorus

Conclusion

The awareness of the importance of adequate nutrition is increasing among dog keepers but the availability of funds is the major constraint to proper dog feeding among dog keepers in FUTO. Most dog keepers rely on homemade (cooked) food and household food leftover for dog feeding. There is need to increase research into the development of dog food from local resources.

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