



The Effect of Pet Remedy on Feline Stress-Related Behaviours in a Rescue Centre



Sian Whitton, Scotland's Rural College,
sian_whitton@hotmail.co.uk

Introduction

Rehoming shelters experience a high turnover of cats requiring aid in finding a new home, with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals taking in 29,432 individuals and The Cats Protection sheltering 41,000 in 2019 alone. These shelters pose a myriad of stressors such as unfamiliar scents, sounds and routines – continued exposure can lead to the development of health condition and an overall reduction in welfare.

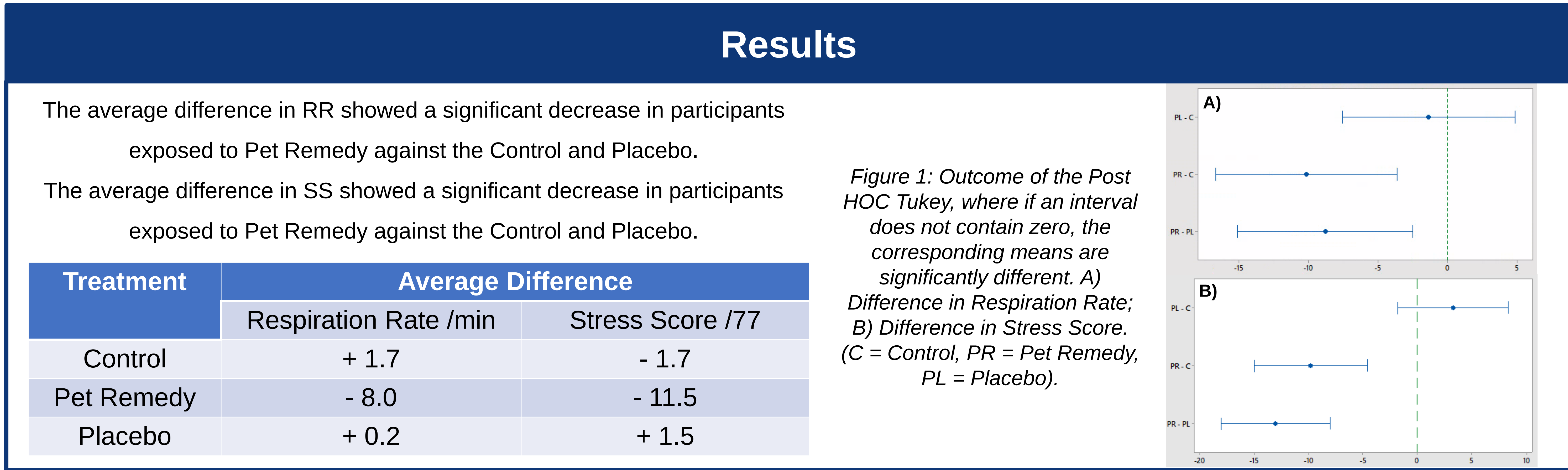
Pet Remedy™ (Unex Designs) is a valerian-based product designed to reduce anxiety in companion animals. This double-blind, placebo-controlled study aimed to determine whether Pet Remedy is suitable for use in reducing stress in shelter cats.

Methods

Forty-six participants were randomly organised into three groups: Control (n = 14), Placebo (n = 17) or Pet Remedy (n = 15). Pet Remedy and the Placebo were set-up in identical bottles and randomly labelled. All testing was conducted whilst wearing a nasal scent blocker.

Participant details, Respiration Rate (RR) and cat Stress Score (SS) (Kessler & Turner, 1997) were recorded prior exposure to one of the treatments: the Control was not exposed to either. After 30 minutes post-treatment RR and SS was recorded.

The difference between pre- and post-treatment results was analysed using a One-Way Analysis of Variance followed by a Post HOC Tukey. A confidence level of 95 % was employed.



Discussion/Conclusion

Exposure to Pet Remedy was associated with significant decreases in both RR and SS. The Control and the Placebo were not determined to be significantly different from one another in either incidence.

Future work would greatly benefit from an increased sample size and breed variation as 95.4% of participants were either Domestic Long or Shorthairs. A larger sample of the population would produce a better understanding of whether efficacy is altered between breed subsets.

If this experiment were to be repeated, a separate party from the examiner could apply the treatment to ensure the examiner did not see the participant's initial reaction. Further improvements could come from the utilisation of scoring via video recordings. This would eliminate the risk of Pet Remedy affecting the examiner and ensure the results are truly representative.

The findings of this study suggest that Pet Remedy may have the potential to improve stress and anxiety experienced by cats in rescue shelters. This is especially important for the improvement of welfare standards and, in turn, mental and physical health status which can negatively impact quality of life.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Kirsty Young and Mia Aitchison for their support and guidance. Thanks to Martyn Barklett-Judge and Andrew Hale (Unex Designs) for their support of this project, providing products as well as friendly advice. Particular thanks to Sunny Harbour Cat & Kitten Rescue, and Fife Cat Shelter for permission and access to participants, without which this study would not have been possible.

References

Kessler M.R., Turner D.C. (1997). Stress and Adaptation of Cats (Felis Silvestris Catus) Housed Singly, in Pairs and in Groups in Boarding Catteries. *Animal Welfare*. 6 (3), pp243-254.