

PSYCHIATRY

Gun-Shy Dogs Neurotic

Observations of 13 gun-shy dogs indicate trouble may be like war neurosis in humans. Pulse rates, breathing, and general behavior abnormal.

► FROM observations since the fall of 1942 on 13 gun-shy dogs and two normal ones, Cornell University scientists have concluded that gun-shy dogs are really neurotic and that the ailment is similar to war neurosis in humans.

Tested at the Cornell Behavior Farm time and again, the dogs, all contributed by sportsmen who ordinarily would shoot them because they are valueless for hunting, were found to be timid, shy, and extremely fearful. Their pulse rates, breathing, and general behavior were always abnormal, and their conditioned reflexes, established in the laboratory, were also abnormal.

The same tests, given to the two normal dogs, brought normal responses, which indicated to the scientists that the gun-shy animals lacked nervous and emotional control. They believe this is the basis pattern in both gun-shyness and war neurosis.

The research was conducted by Dr. Arthur V. Jensen under the direction of Prof. O. D. Anderson. (See *SNL*, May 29, 1943). From what he has learned of the dogs' actions, Dr. Jensen says he can tell just by looking at an animal whether it is abnormal.

The gun-shy animals feared strange objects and people, and showed inhibited movements when led on a leash. Some tended to avoid people completely and others would do anything to be petted. There were no evidences or records of harsh treatment in early life or a previous environment to suggest causes for this behavior.

One sign of abnormal behavior was the absence of normal curiosity. A normal dog, brought into a strange room, for example, shows immediate interest by exploring each corner and sniffing at objects in the room. The gun-shy dog crouches in one spot and does not move. Sportsmen who sent this kind of dog for study said the animals feared not only the sound of guns but also other loud or sudden noises, such as the backfire of a car or the roll of thunder.

One dog's pulse rate was more than 200 a minute, compared with the normal 60 to 90 beats a minute. Most of the gun-shy animals had rates between 150-200.

All exhibited the symptoms often described in cases of war neuroses, but the Cornell workers do not suggest an analogy. It is known that persons with war neuroses are marked by over-sensitivity to loud noises, inhibitory phenomena, irritability, and disturbances of the automatic nervous system, which regulates visceral activity and glandular secretions.

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