

## INFOGRAPHIC

### OPINION

Plain English version

# Canine educational practices and tools

Opinion of the FRCAW concerning the impacts of canine educational tools and practices on the welfare of dogs (2022)



### PURPOSE

To report on **canine education in France**

To report on the **practices and tools used**

To set out their **possible effects** on the **welfare of dogs**

**How we collected the information in the report:** 364 canine education professionals and 332 dog owners in France told us about themselves, their dogs and their experiences\* (2 questionnaires, Feb – Mar 2022). We also looked at what experts had to say on the subject. \*Sample may not be representative.

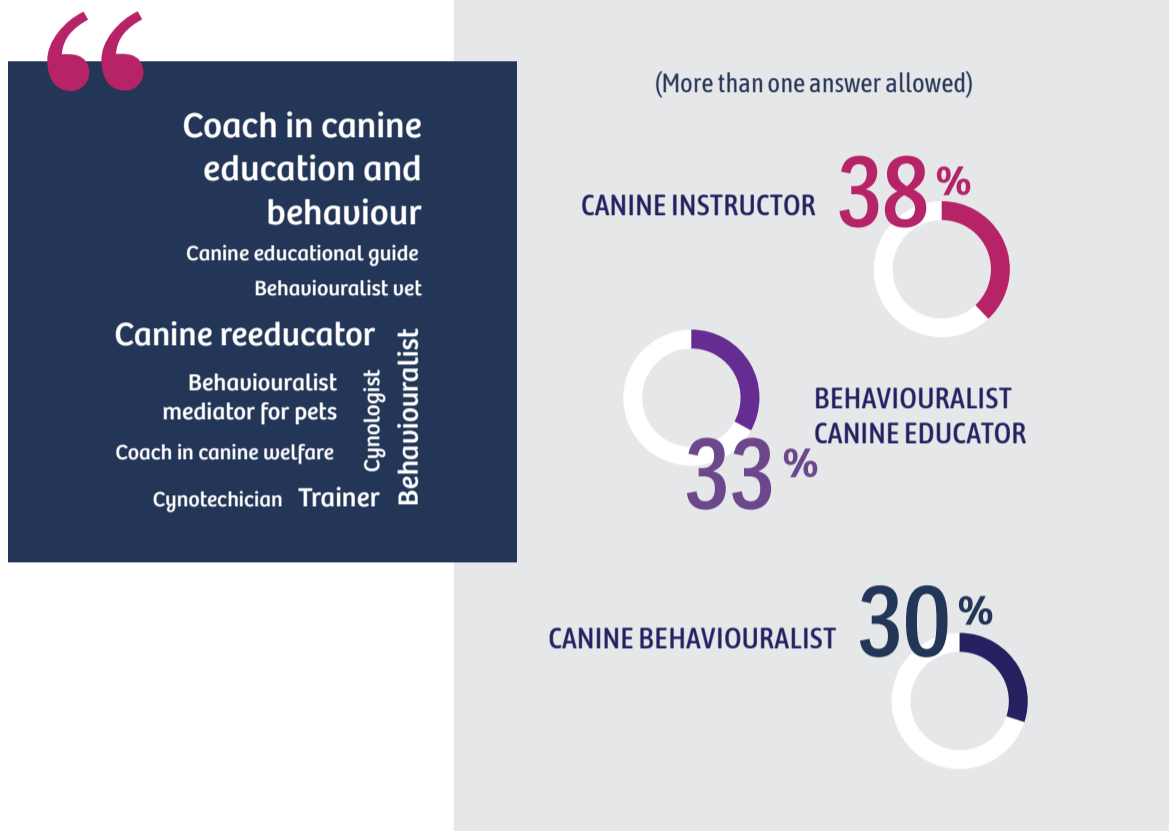
# CANINE EDUCATION IN FRANCE WHO PROVIDES IT AND HOW?



## A range of approaches

Professionals describe their activity in a variety of ways.  
Many job titles mention **canine behaviour**.

### How professionals describe what they do



## KEY POINTS



### Very varied qualifications and training

Professional Baccaauréat/  
Certificate, SCC Instructor, ACACED,  
College Diploma, seminars, talks, etc.



### Possible differences

in what professionals are taught  
and what they may teach owners  
to do.



### Not many years of practice

On average, professionals have practised for less than 5 years



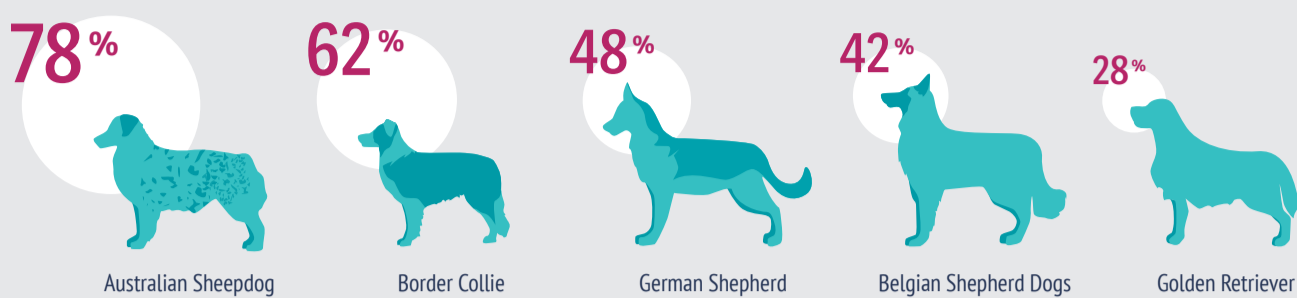
The FRCAW recommends that **standards for the training** of canine professionals **should be identified and characterised**. Guidelines for training advisors based on animal welfare could also be defined.

Should it be impossible to achieve this harmonisation of training, **an 'animal welfare' label** could *a minima* be awarded to training programmes where standards conform to a specified framework, to be devised, for the respect of animal welfare.

## WHICH DOG BREEDS ARE BROUGHT TO CLASSES?

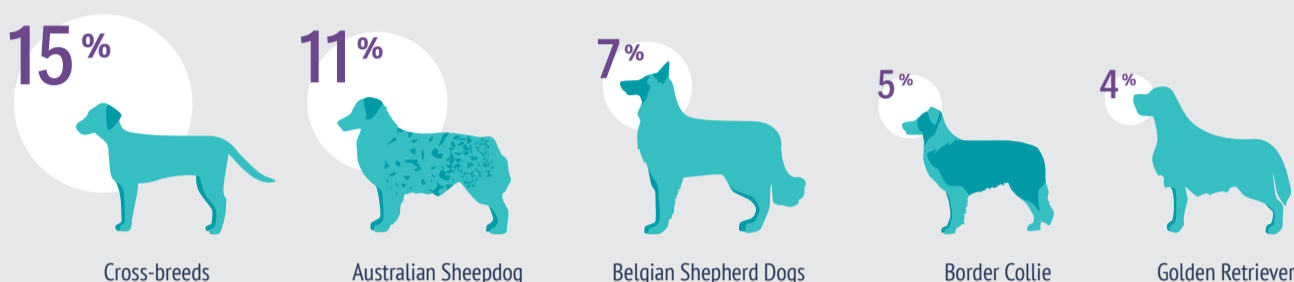
### What professionals told us

(More than one answer allowed)



### What owners told us

(Only one answer allowed)



### WHY THESE BREEDS?

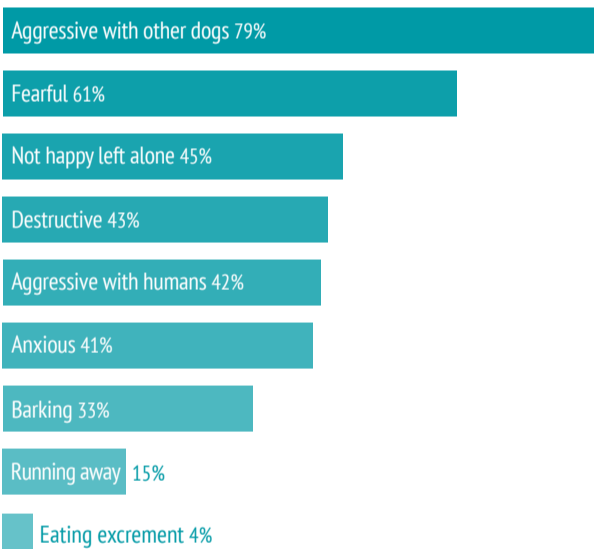
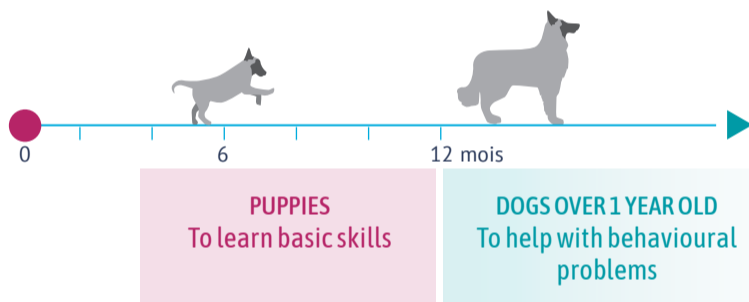
These particular breeds could be taken to classes the most because:

they are the most popular dog breeds in France

AND

they are the breeds that need more physical and mental activities

## MAIN REASONS TO TAKE A DOG TO SEE A PROFESSIONAL (as reported by the professionals)



## WHAT THE PROFESSIONALS SAY

→ For professionals, the relationship between humans and dogs is based on **companionship** (balance between the needs and expectations of the human and the dog).

→ They say they mostly use practices and tools associated with **positive methods that are good for the dog's welfare** (encouraging a dog to behave in certain ways, rewarding the dog).

→ They say they have a positive approach and choose the best method for the individual dog.

**BUT**

→ A minority of professional teachers say that they still use practices and tools associated with negative methods (making a dog behave in certain ways, punishing the dog).

→ Some 'coercive' tools are used by owners on the advice of a professional (shaker containing pebbles or nails, electric or strangle collars).

→ Punishments are changing: non-physical punishments are increasingly used (e.g. isolating a dog).



The FRCAW recommends that the findings of this report (a view of human-animal relationships based on companionship, the infrequent use of tools and practices associated with negative methods, the adaptation of the work of the professional to the individual dog) should be **confirmed through representative samples and/or observations on the ground before any conclusive picture of the canine educational landscape in France is proposed.**

## WE EXAMINED 11 PRACTICES

### Practices associated with negative canine educational methods



**Physical punishment**  
light smack, shaking the dog by the scruff of its neck

**Stronger physical punishment**  
hitting the dog



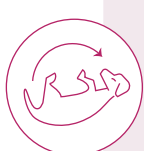
**Frightening the dog**  
shouting, leaning over the dog in a threatening way

**Telling the dog off with words**



**Leaving the dog on its own**

**Forbidding interactions except during exercises**



**Forcing the dog to lie on its back and submit**  
also known as the 'alpha roll'

### Practices associated with positive canine educational methods



**Petting the dog**

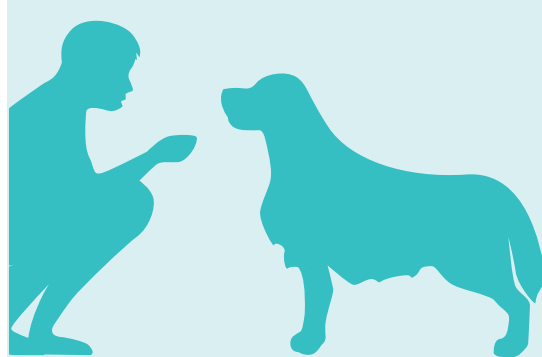


**Encouraging the dog with words**



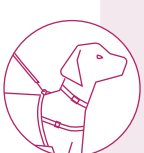
**Praising the dog with words**

**Letting people and dogs interact freely**  
during class warm-up



## WE EXAMINED 23 TOOLS

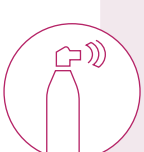
### Tools associated with negative methods



Anti-escape collar

Anti-pull harness or Halti harness

Anti-pull head collar (halter) (Halti)



Catapult using rice grains etc.



Choke chain

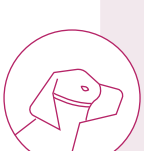
Citronella impregnated collar or compressed air collar



Compressed air spray (Pet corrector)

Dog used to control others

Electric or electrostatic collar



Muzzle *preventing* dog from drinking, eating, barking, or even breathing properly

Prong/pinck collar (Torquatus collar)

Shaker tin containing pebbles or nails



Strangle collar

Ultrasonic collar

Vibrating collar

### Tools associated with positive methods



Clicker

Laser

Target stick

Toy (ball, squeaky toy, tug toy, Kong toy, sausage/bungee, etc.)

Treats



### Neutral tools

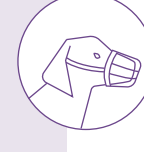


Lunge

Muzzle *allowing* dog to drink, eat, bark and breathe

Simple harness

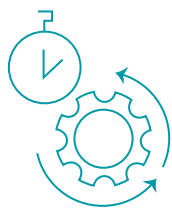
Whistle



## FACTORS AFFECTING ANIMAL WELFARE

Whatever the practice or tool used, the following factors can affect a dog's welfare

### Nature of the practices/tools themselves and how they are used (methodological factors)



Used too long, too often or too strongly

The dog can't predict when something will happen

Used badly, or the use doesn't make sense to the dog in a particular situation

Poor construction of tools

### A dog's nature (individual factors)

Physically fragile (illness, injury or breed)

Physically or emotionally sensitive

Anxious, fearful or emotional temperament

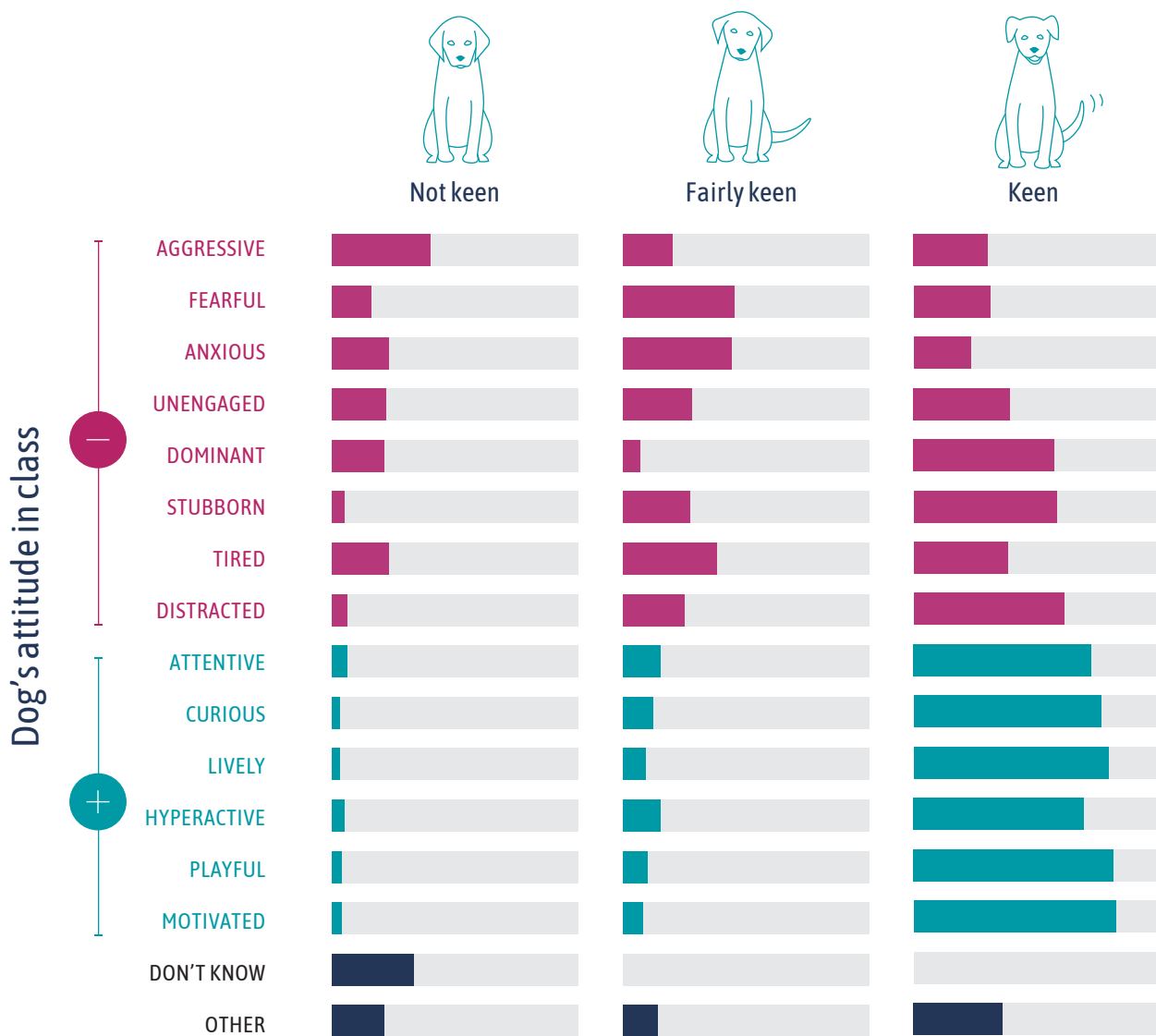
Poorly socialised (with other dogs) or poorly familiarised (with humans)



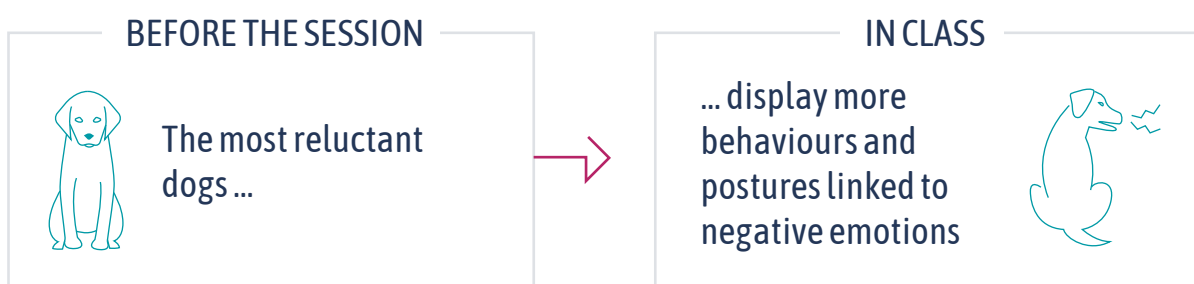
The FRCAW places strong emphasis on the importance of **taking account of a dog's emotions** with regard to the use of any practice or tool, so that any negative emotions in the dog can be minimised as far as possible. In this sense, **it should be an absolute requirement that any action taken for the purpose of canine education must be adapted to each individual.**

# LINK BETWEEN KEENNESS TO ATTEND AND HOW A DOG ACTS IN CLASS?

How keen is the dog to go to the class?



Relationship between a dog's interest in going to a session and its attitude in class, as reported by dog owners (bars show percentages)



## Recommendation 5 /



The FRCAW recommends that the relationship between a dog's degree of motivation to participate in canine educational sessions and its postures/behaviours during the sessions should be **confirmed by observations on the ground.**



Further, the behaviours associated with negative (and positive) emotions in dogs should be known by all canine professionals and owners of dogs, so that a dog's attendance at **education classes can be suspended when it exhibits several of these behaviours.**



To this end, analysis of such behaviours could be included in the training requirements for professionals and **awareness-raising information sheets** on the subject could be produced for dog owners.

## VERDICT ON PUPPY SCHOOLS?



- Owners like puppy schools but professionals have mixed feelings.
- It is hard to assess whether puppy schools are good or bad for welfare on the basis of existing scientific research.

### Recommendation **6** /



The FRCAW recommends that the practices employed by puppy schools should be studied in order to ensure that their influence on a puppy's socialisation and familiarisation is a positive one. If this is found to be the case, attendance at such establishments could be entirely beneficial to the development of these animals.

## HOW EFFECTIVE ARE PRACTICES AND TOOLS?

### WHAT PEOPLE LOOK FOR:



#### Quick results

Professionals and owners don't judge effectiveness by quick results.



#### Can be repeated

(by owners outside class)

#### Lasting results

These are the key criteria by which professionals and owners judge effectiveness.

### THE EXPERT VERDICT:



**Negative methods are no more effective** in improving the outcomes of canine education **than positive methods.**

(Rooney et Cowan, 2011 ; Hiby, 2004)

### Recommendation **7** /



The FRCAW strongly emphasises the importance of **choosing canine educational practices and tools associated with positive methods.**

## CONCLUSIONS

### Reminder: the information in this report is provisional

*The information collected from professionals and owners in this report is provisional. No assessment has been made of how representative it is. It would be useful to examine a larger and more representative sample of the general population and/or carry out direct observations on the ground and to revise the report accordingly.*

## Recommendation 4 /



The FRCAW recommends that the following studies should be conducted following the present expertise:



A similar expertise on the practices and tools not dealt with in this report, in particular those used in **training** for particular purposes such as hunting and biting



**Observations on the ground**, to fill the gaps in the scientific literature and to provide improved characterisations of the contexts in which practices and tools are employed during a canine education class



An assessment of **the welfare of demonstration dogs and dogs used for purposes of control** in canine education



A characterisation of the contexts of use for canine educational tools and practices **outside canine education classes** (directly by the owners). It would in fact appear that the majority of French citizens who use an electric collar (71,8%) do so without consulting a canine professional (Masson et al., 2018)



[View the full report](#)