



## An Active Lifestyle Reduces Fearfulness in Dogs

According to a behavioral survey of nearly 14,000 dogs conducted at the University of Helsinki, the more dogs are engaged in activities and the more diverse experiences and canine friends they have, the less fearful they are in new situations and environments. Genes also play an important part, the researchers report. Dogs who were engaged in activities the most and were actively trained were found to be the least fearful.

The survey indicates that insufficient socialization of puppies to various situations and new environments in particular has a strong link with fearfulness related to novel situations, loud noises, and different walking surfaces, such as slippery surfaces, transparent stairs, or metal grilles. On the other hand, the company of other dogs reduced the occurrence of nonsocial fear. Fear of fireworks and surfaces was more prevalent among the dogs of first-time dog owners, while differences were also seen between rural and urban dogs.

Furthermore, as suggested by prior research, the study demonstrated that nonsocial fearfulness also is more common in sterilized females and small dogs. Being fearful of slippery or otherwise unfamiliar surfaces was also associated with a generally fearful disposition in dogs.

Significant differences between breeds were identified in the study, with Cairn terriers among the most fearful breeds and Chinese crested dogs among the least fearful. However, variance was seen between different nonsocial fears in the fearfulness of individual breeds. For instance, Welsh corgi pembrokes expressed a lot of noise sensitivity but little fearfulness of surfaces. At the same time, the latter was common among Lapponian herders, miniature schnauzers, Chihuahuas, and Labrador retrievers, while noise sensitivity was less so.

“The breed-specific differences support the idea that fearfulness is inherited. In other words, breeding choices matter, even without knowing the exact mechanisms of inheritance. However, this study offers dog owners tools and support for previous notions related to improving the wellbeing of their dogs. Diverse socialization in puppyhood and an active lifestyle can significantly reduce social and nonsocial fearfulness,” said Hannes Lohi, PhD, from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Faculty of Medicine, University of Helsinki.

## New Tool Aids Diagnosis of Cushing's Syndrome in Dogs

Researchers on the VetCompass team at the University of London's Royal Veterinary College have developed a tool that can be used to evaluate the risk of Cushing's syndrome in dogs. The freely accessible tool is designed to be used in practices to support decisionmaking and increase confidence in diagnosis.

Cushing's syndrome can be difficult to diagnose because the clinical signs are often nonspecific to the disease, the researchers report. Additionally, there is no single, highly accurate test for Cushing's syndrome and these tests are often overused, making results difficult to interpret.

The researchers developed the tool to be used in practices to assess individual patient risks before confirmatory testing. Using statistical methods, it's made up of 10 "predictive" factors for Cushing's syndrome. The tool reports the probability of an individual dog having Cushing's syndrome based on these factors.

The tool is available as a free download at [rvc.ac.uk/media/default/vetcompass/documents/cushings-prediction-tool.pdf](http://rvc.ac.uk/media/default/vetcompass/documents/cushings-prediction-tool.pdf).

## Human-Animal Bond Expert Shares Insights

At the 2020 virtual Purdue Veterinary Conference, the Elanco Human-Animal Bond Lecture featured a Zoom presentation by Zenithson Ng, DVM, MS, DABVP (Canine/Feline), clinical associate professor of canine and feline primary care at the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine.



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Ng began his presentation, "A Day in the Life of a Service Dog: A Welfare Perspective," by sharing a documentary clip of interviews with several service dog owners. The full documentary, *Pick of the Litter*, is available to stream on Netflix. He went on to explain how dogs are chosen for this life of service as soon as they are born and gave examples of the work that service dogs can perform in the special-needs community.

Purdue veterinary medicine researchers, as part of the Purdue University Center for the Human-Animal Bond, also continue to conduct collaborative studies aimed at understanding the effects of animal-assisted intervention for autism.