

PRESS RELEASE

Dogs are as smart as toddlers

According to research, dogs are as clever as the average two year old! Psychologist Stanley Coren, from the University of British Columbia who has led this research, revealed at the annual American Psychological Association convention this weekend that our four-legged friends can understand on average 165 words and gestures. 'Super-dogs' or dogs that represent the top 20 per cent of the canine intelligence community can recognise about 250 words.

Although there is no universally accepted test to measure dogs' intelligence, several IQ tests have been developed over the years ranking for obedience and working intelligence. The smartest dogs according to Coren are Border Collie's and Poodles. This research has also revealed that dogs can understand simple maths. This conclusion was based on evaluating the dogs' confusion after they watched a specific number of treats get dropped behind a screen, then discovered that the actual number of treats were more or less than expected.

But determining just how smart dogs are isn't a new idea. Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC) considered the dog, elephant and a few other mammals to have the mental level of a human child. But by the 17th Century, many scientists and philosophers believed dogs were simply dumb animals incapable of thought. For example, French philosopher René Descartes suggested dogs had no intelligence, reasoning or consciousness, instead they were controlled by physical reflexes and unthinking responses to things that stimulate them. However, this thinking was challenged in 1859 with the publication of 'On the Origin of Species' by Charles Darwin, which changed our thinking towards animals and their behaviour. Darwin concluded animals and people have just differing levels of awareness, reasoning ability, intelligence and memory.

In the meantime, a new research study into dogs is being led by Berkhamsted based dog listener, Hanne Grice from Walk the Dog. Hanne is analysing how we humans interpret dog's behaviour and their body language which can often lead to misunderstandings and problems for dog owners. Hanne is looking for willing participants to help with her study. You don't have to be a pet owner, but if you've got a spare 10 minutes and like to take part in this research then Hanne wants to hear from you!

Notes to editors:

- To participate in the research study led by Hanne Grice, participants should email info@walk-the-dog.net or call Walk the Dog on (t) 01442 878628, quoting "research".
- Walk the Dog is an award winning pet services business based in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire. Visit www.walk-the-dog.net
- For more information about Hanne Grice, Doglistener visit www.doglistener.tv