

Dogs may be self-aware

23rd February, 2021



Creative Commons
via NAPARAZZI on flickr.com

Have you ever wondered what animals think about? A team of scientists explored this question by investigating whether dogs have self-awareness. Researchers from a university in Hungary set out to determine whether canines have a sense of

self and of body awareness. Researcher Peter Pongracz explained why his team conducted the study. He said: "Self-awareness is a rather poorly investigated area of dog cognition." He added: "Body awareness is a mental capacity to organize someone's action by taking in consideration their own body exists." His test put dogs in situations that would make them aware of their body position. The study is published in the journal "Scientific Reports".

The scientists conducted tests on 54 dogs. The dogs had to respond to commands from their owners. Researchers attached a toy to a mat and asked the dog to give the toy to its owner. The dog had to understand it would be unable to take the toy to its owner unless it got off the mat first. Many of the dogs understood the issue and got off the mat to complete the task. The researchers said this showed a sense of body awareness. They wrote that body awareness is, "the ability to hold information about one's own body in mind, as an explicit object, in relation to other objects in the world". They said this is "one of the fundamental building blocks of self-representation" and that the dogs in the tests exhibited this.

Sources: [inverse.com](https://www.inverse.com) / [ctvnews.ca](https://www.ctvnews.ca) / [akc.org](https://www.akc.org)

Writing

Dogs are "man's best friend". Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

wondered / scientists / question / dogs / self-awareness / body / cognition / journal / tests / commands / owners / mat / information / object / building blocks / mind

True / False

- a) A team of scientists investigated self-analysis in dogs. T / F
- b) Researchers looked into whether canines had a sense of body awareness. T / F
- c) A researcher said there is much research into dog cognition. T / F
- d) The study is published in a journal called "Canine Reports". T / F
- e) The research looked at self-awareness in over 540 dogs. T / F
- f) Dogs had to get off a mat and take a toy to their owner. T / F
- g) A researcher said dogs understand they are an explicit object. T / F
- h) Researchers said dogs exhibited self-representation in tests. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. wondered | a. conscious |
| 2. explored | b. thought |
| 3. canines | c. feeling |
| 4. cognition | d. basic |
| 5. aware | e. reflected on |
| 6. commands | f. fixed |
| 7. attached | g. dogs |
| 8. sense | h. orders |
| 9. fundamental | i. showed |
| 10. exhibited | j. investigated |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of dogs?
- b) What do you know about self-awareness?
- c) How self-aware are you?
- d) How self-aware do you think dogs are?
- e) How intelligent are dogs?
- f) What do you think dogs think about?
- g) What do you think dogs worry about?
- h) What questions would you like to ask a dog?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. scientists explored | a. exhibited this |
| 2. canines | b. capacity |
| 3. a rather poorly | c. tests on 54 dogs |
| 4. mental | d. hold information |
| 5. The study is published in the | e. have a sense |
| 6. The scientists conducted | f. to other objects |
| 7. respond to commands | g. journal "Scientific Reports" |
| 8. the ability to | h. from their owners |
| 9. in relation | i. investigated area |
| 10. dogs in the tests | j. this question |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What do you think of the expression: 'A dog is man's best friend'?
- Is a dog or a cat a better pet?
- How can we make dogs more self-aware?
- How important is this research?
- How would life change if you were more self-aware?
- What questions might dogs like to ask humans?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Spelling

- etimreedn whether canines have a sense
- a rather poorly iseatevniogdt area
- mental caiptyca
- by taking in sinrtdioocane their own
- His test put dogs in utnasiiois
- The study is published in the jlnruao
- respond to cmoamsn
- Researchers tatdchea a toy to a mat
- the dogs understood the ssuie
- as an txeipilc object
- one of the ntnmafdaeuil building blocks
- dogs in the tests xdieiehbt this

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. j	3. g	4. b	5. a
6. h	7. f	8. c	9. d	10. i

Role Play

Role A – Dogs

You think dogs are the best pets. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their pets. Also, tell the others which is the least fun of these (and why): goldfish, parrots or tortoises.

Role B – Goldfish

You think goldfish are the best pets. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their pets. Also, tell the others which is the least fun of these (and why): dogs, parrots or tortoises.

Role C – Parrots

You think parrots are the best pets. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their pets. Also, tell the others which is the least fun of these (and why): goldfish, dogs or tortoises.

Role D – Tortoises

You think tortoises are the best pets. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their pets. Also, tell the others which is the least fun of these (and why): goldfish, parrots or dogs.

Speaking – Pets

Rank these with your partner. Put the best pets at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| • Dog | • Cat |
| • Goldfish | • Parrot |
| • Rabbit | • Horse |
| • Tarantula | • Tortoise |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	F	e	F	f	T	g	F	h	T
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.