

## CAN DOGS SMELL EMOTIONS?

### CANINE CONNECTION WITH HEART

#### Dogs Smell Your Emotional State and It Affects Their Mood

There is a lot of evidence which suggests that dogs are good at reading human emotions from facial expressions and also from human voices and body postures and that this can affect the dog's responses to things or people in their world. However, all of these studies focused on the dog recognizing visual and auditory cues for emotion transmitted by people.

The question about whether dogs can smell emotional states, and whether they respond to them was recently experimentally addressed by a team of researchers headed by neurobiologist Biagio D'Aniello of the University of Naples "Federico II." The results were published in the journal *Anima Cognition*. The researchers say that their study "was designed to examine a new perspective, namely the transmission of emotional states from humans to dogs via human body odors produced during happiness and fear."

The first step in a piece of research like this involves gathering the scent stimuli. Samples of sweat were then collected on pads, placed in sealed packets, frozen, and returned to the behavioral lab.

The test subjects were a sample of 40 Labrador retrievers and golden retrievers who had been outfitted with mobile heart rate monitors. Each dog was tested in a small room with its owner and a stranger (who was not one of the odor donors). Both the dog's owner and the stranger sat reading magazines and did not specifically interact with the dog. Meanwhile, an apparatus was used to disperse scents from either the "happy sweat" or the "fearful sweat," while in a control condition no odorant was introduced.

The dogs' behaviors and physiological responses changed as a result of their exposure to emotionally tinged sweat-related odors. The dogs that had been exposed to the fear-related smells showed more behavioral signs of stress than those exposed to the happy or neutral smells. These dogs seemed to also be seeking reassurance through contact with their owners. In addition, when the fear smell was in the room the dogs' heart rates were considerably higher than they were in either the happy or neutral conditions.

While the dogs were clearly responding emotionally to the scent of fear, it seemed as though their response mirrored the emotion that they were detecting in that they were acting in a fearful manner themselves.

The dogs also recognize the odor associated with a happy emotion. Exposure to that scent did not produce stress signs or an elevated heart rate, but rather the dogs now tended to show more interest and approach behavior to the stranger. Thus data supports the dog's ability to perceive human emotional chemo-messages. So the bottom line is that dogs do seem to be able to smell our emotional state and they then seem to trust our responses to the situation by adopting those emotional states as their own.

Continued.....

#### WE KNOW HOW YOU FEEL!



WORRIED DOG



RELAXED AND HAPPY!



I'M HAPPY IF YOU'RE HAPPY!

Highly Recommended  
The Secret Language  
of Dogs

By Victoria Stilwell

Recent research show that dogs perceive and feel us in a variety of ways and it deeply affects them. We can contribute to the quality of their lives by being aware and assume responsibility for our inner states when we're with our dogs. We can't fool our dogs!



Look deep into the heart of a dog and you will find your own.

**References that may be of interest.**

How Dogs Love Us.	The Genius of Dogs	Chaser	Dog Sense	Dog is Love
Gregory Berns	Brian Hare Vanessa Woods	John W. Pilley	John Bradshaw	Clive D. L. Wynne

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