

Study: Dogs appear to understand meaning behind words (National Public Radio/Shots blog) 11/28

In a study from England shows that dogs are able to differentiate between meaningful and meaningless sounds and suggests that a dog's brain breaks up speech into two parts: emotional cues and the meaning of words. These two parts also appear to be processed on opposite sides of the brain – emotional cues on the right side of the brain and the meaning of words on the left. Nerve fibers cross over in the brain, so tell emotional things to your dog in its left ear and for commands to be understood clearly, tell them in the right.

Comment: Interesting information which tends to validate having your dog heel, or walk, on your left side as his right ear will be towards you to better process commands! SEM

Canine obesity linked to intestinal flora (PhysOrg.com) 12/1

A new study found that just like their human counterparts, obese dogs have less diverse gut bacteria than do thin dogs. In fecal samples, in lean dogs certain microbes predominated but in obese dogs specific gram negative bacteria were more prevalent. These bacteria may be related to the chronic inflammation status of the obese dogs however more research is needed to examine the role it plays.

Comment: Could manipulating gut bacteria help in the fight against canine (and maybe human) obesity? SEM

Research explores gene therapy for blind dogs (Independent (London) (tiered subscription model), The) 12/8

Retinitis pigmentosa is a genetic and degenerative condition of the eye that leads to progressive loss of the photoreceptors in the retina – rods and cones – leading to blindness. In this study researchers used gene therapy to “turn on” other healthy cells -ganglion and bipolar cells - in the retina of blind dogs (and mice) to make them behave like rods and cones. Some level of vision was restored with the use of this therapy – more tests are currently being performed to determine how much vision has been restored.

Comment: Vey interesting work that may very well have significant implication in restoring some sight to people, as well as dogs, affected by this condition. SEM

Dogs to shield vulnerable species from danger (Age (Melbourne, Australia), The) 12/14

An extinct species in the wild, the eastern barred bandicoot, is hoping to be reestablished in the wild with the help of an Australian zoo and specially trained guard dogs. Maremma livestock guarding dogs have been successfully trained to live with and protect penguins and this technique is hoping to be used with reintroduced bandicoots to protect them from predation by foxes and feral cats.

Comment: Our canine companions continue to surprise us with their trainability and adaptability to not only aid us but other species as well. SEM

3D printing gives high-energy dog freedom to run (BuzzFeed) 12/15

Derby the dog, who was born with deformities of the front limbs, is off and running again due to the help of 3D-printed prosthetic devices that accommodate for his deformities. The device uses flexible elbow cups and rigid rockers to let Derby enjoy more freedom than a cart does. Developed by 3D Systems in Massachusetts, a director of the company hopes that this technology opens the doors to helping other handicapped dogs.

Comment: What a fantastic way to use new technology – better than 3D printing guns! SEM

Children with autism who live with pets exhibit more social skills (B2C Marketing Insider) 1/1

A study at the University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine showed that children who live with pets may have greater social skills than those who live without animals. Pets help encourage social interaction and therefore help with developing social skills and an autistic child's assertiveness. And the longer the child lived with a dog the more the child's social skills improved.

Comment: Pets, especially dogs, help us all become better people not just those with autism – “Lord help me be the person my dog thinks I am”. SEM

Petco stops selling pet treats made in China (ABC News/The Associated Press) 1/5

Amid safety concerns, Petco has removed all dog and cat treats made in China from its shelves. Petsmart will follow removing all such treats from its store by March 2015. Treats from China have been linked to illness in thousands of pets and over 1000 deaths in dogs and ongoing tests by FDA are still trying to identify the cause.

Comment: Simply put – Finally!! SEM

Team uncovers genetic roots of canine eye diseases (CNN) 1/2

Researchers have discovered the genes for two canine eye diseases, glaucoma (which causes increased pressure in the eye) in Norwegian Elkhounds and retinitis pigmentosa (which causes degeneration of the photoreceptors of the eye) in Swedish Vallhunds. Both these conditions affect humans as well so this research may very well have implications for treating humans. Genetic tests are being developed for both diseases to help breeders avoid the spread of the diseases in their respective breeds. The researchers are also plan to develop treatments for both diseases, which in turn may benefit people.

Comment: Glaucoma is caused by many different causes – it is good to see one cause identified. Glaucoma does show up in our breed so it would be interesting to know if the gene that causes glaucoma in Norwegian Elkhounds is the cause of the glaucoma that can affect Siberians. SEM

JAVMA study looks at implications of lapsed rabies vaccines (Enterprise (Brockton, Mass.), The) 1/8

A team of researchers looked at the best way to handle pets with recently lapsed rabies vaccines when exposed to rabies. Current practices require the pet to be quarantined for 6 months or euthanized. The new study showed that pets whose rabies vaccines were overdue and exposed to rabies responded well to being immediately given a rabies booster and placed on 45 day quarantine. No pets so treated showed signs of rabies. With the information from this study current guidelines for pets whose rabies vaccines have recently lapsed and subsequently exposed to rabies may need to be adjusted.

Comment: This makes very good sense since we all know there is no timer associated with vaccines, nor drugs for that matter that say that EXACTLY at this time and date they will no longer be protective. But please note this is ONLY suggested for pets that have been vaccinated against rabies NOT for those that have NEVER been given a rabies vaccination SEM