

# MANY DOGS

## News and updates from project HQ

ManyDogs offers a systematic approach to addressing questions of canine behavior and cognition that were previously unanswerable or whose answers are thus far inconclusive.

We recently described our mission in an open-access, peer-reviewed publication which you can access at the following link:

[ManyDogs: A Big Team Science Approach to Investigating Canine Behavior & Cognition](#)

(Pssst: If you're looking for a succinct summary, check out [this thread on X](#))

## ManyDogs 1 Findings

In our first large-scale project, canine cognition labs from across the world recently united, standardizing methods and pooling participants to weigh in on the question of whether dogs interpret human pointing as a social communicative gesture. This colossal effort (the first of its kind!) enabled researchers to test over 450 dogs using the same experimental paradigm. Other than learning invaluable lessons in big team science and collaboration that we'll put to use in future studies, **what did we find?**

- Dogs' performance was not significantly different in the ostensive vs. non-ostensive conditions.
- While dogs performed greater than chance in both conditions, they were nonetheless really poor at finding food across both conditions.
- Our results suggest that dogs can and do follow points, but not all pointing gestures are created equal.
- We also observed that dogs are not using their noses to sniff out the treats in this paradigm. When we hid the food and didn't give dogs any hints, their performance was the lowest yet, which means they were just guessing!

### READ MORE!

Find our peer-reviewed open access publication:  
<https://t.co/ruCF9l3HC1>

Follow the ta(le) on X:  
<https://x.com/ManyDogsProject/status/1696340751683321943?s=20>

## Do dogs understand and act on human pointing as though it is a social communicative gesture?

### Participants



### Methods

**3 different conditions** during which dog searches for hidden food:

1. "**Ostensive**" = eye contact, say dog's name, + point
2. "**Non-ostensive**" = looking down, clear throat, + point
3. "**Odor control**" = no social cues

### Results

Dogs can and do follow points, but not all pointing gestures are created equal!

In our current methodology, dogs only weakly followed points, regardless of condition.

Consistent with many past studies, dogs did not use odor cues to find food.



Kiko from RI!  
(Brown Dog Lab)

## Thanks to a Group Effort!

ManyDogs 1 was an incredible effort and we could not have done it without all of the partner labs and human and dog participants!



Gabby from Tucson!  
(Arizona Canine Cognition Center)



Tsuki from Croatia!  
(Centre for Mind and Behaviour)






Nori from Brooklyn!  
(Hunter Thinking Dog Center)



## On the Horizon...

We are thrilled to announce that we are working on a new project to get all of the dogs of science wagging their tails enthusiastically... and the best part? You're invited to join the pack! We're deep in planning-mode and will be in touch with more details and updates soon. In the meantime, here's a sneak-peek:

### **The MD2 project will focus on social learning and imitation.**

-  Did you know that dogs are natural learners through observation? They can learn new tricks by watching humans and even imitate actions that may seem pointless, just like humans do.
-  These behaviors indicate that dogs are highly social animals, able to understand us in ways other animals cannot. Although they may not always comprehend the exact purpose of our actions, they trust that there is meaning behind them and want to connect with us on a deeper level.
-  This fascinating area of research provides valuable insights into the bonds between dogs and humans and sheds light on how learning evolves across different species.

**Keep following us as we continue to explore canine cognition and uncover the secrets behind dogs' impressive social intelligence!**