UC Merced

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

Domestic Dogs Sensitivity to the Accuracy of Human Informants

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8tr0k52q

Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 41(0)

Authors

Pelgrim, Madeline
Tecwyn, Emma
Espinosa, Julia
et al.

Publication Date

2019

Peer reviewed

Domestic Dogs Sensitivity to the Accuracy of Human Informants

Madeline Pelgrim
University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Emma Tecwyn
Birmingham City University, Birmingham, United Kingdom

Julia Espinosa
University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Angie Johnston
Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, United States

Sarah MacKay Marton
University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Daphna Buchsbaum
University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Abstract

Domestic dogs excel at understanding human social-communicative gestures. The present study explores whether dogs can use peoples past accuracy when deciding who to trust. In Experiment 1, dogs watched an informant hide a treat under one of two containers and then point at one of them. Dogs were more likely to follow an accurate (pointed correctly) vs. the inaccurate (pointed incorrectly) informants point. In Experiment 2, dogs interacted separately with an accurate and inaccurate informant and again were more likely to follow an accurate point. In test trials, dogs did not witness hiding of the treat and saw the same two informants simultaneously point at different locations. Here, they chose between the locations at chance-level. Dogs inability to selectively follow a previously accurate informant when presented with conflicting information suggests that, unlike children, they may not be able to use past informant accuracy when choosing whose information to use.