

ManyDogs Connected

April 2026 · Collaborator Update



REPORT FROM LEADERSHIP

From the Leadership Team

Welcome to the very first edition of ManyDogs Connected – a new newsletter hosted by the Communications & Community Building Committee. We're thrilled to kick off this initiative with you, our incredible network of collaborators, and we're grateful for all that you contribute.

Because one of ManyDogs' greatest strengths is its people, we created this space to help keep you connected. Here, we'll share project updates, celebrate publications, highlight new opportunities, and amplify the impactful work happening across our community.

NEW THIS ISSUE

Three Tools to Keep Us Connected

We're introducing three new community tools, but we need your help to maximize their effectiveness! We want to make this newsletter a one-stop shop, and that only works if it reflects what's actually happening in your labs. Links are below: please bookmark them, share them with your teams, and use them often.

[Canine and Science Events \(Google Form\)](#)

Do you know about events for dogs or people who love dogs? Share conferences, workshops, and the like here, and we will populate this [Google Calendar](#) so we can all stay current!

[News & Opportunities \(Google Form\)](#)

Have a job posting, funding opportunity, new publication, or anything else the community should know about? Submit it here and we'll share it in the next issue. **This form is meant for all canine science news — not just ManyDogs-specific items.**

[MD Publications & Presentations \(Qualtrics\)](#)

Deposit citations and (optionally) materials for any talks, posters, or publications related to ManyDogs. We'll use submissions to build a shared, searchable repository — a single place for the whole network to find ManyDogs outputs.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Featured FAQs

Q I need help learning how to “speak” ManyDogs. Specifically, I often get confused about how to refer to the overall project vs. the individual studies. Any pointers?

A You are definitely not alone! This is one of the most frequently asked questions we receive. A helpful way to think about it is:

- The ManyDogs **Project** refers to the overall international consortium, research network, and community of shared research collaborations that exist and inform the work we do together.
- A ManyDogs **Study** (e.g., ManyDogs2 or MD2) refers to a *specific multi-site collaborative research study* conducted within the ManyDogs Project framework.

A simple rule of thumb to follow: You may join the ManyDogs Project, but you participate in a ManyDogs Study (like ManyDogs1, for example). If you are looking for language to use in presentations, emails, or conversations, we will be sharing our “How to Speak ManyDogs” brand guidelines soon.

Q For ManyDogs2 (MD2), can sites adapt parts of the protocol, survey, or materials to fit local needs?

A This has come up in a number of ways across sites, including questions about translations, survey wording, testing spaces, and setup details.

Because MD2 is a multi-site study, core procedures and materials should remain as standardized as possible so data can be meaningfully compared across labs. At the same time, some local clarification or adjustment may be needed depending on language, room layout, or dog characteristics.

When you have a site-specific question, the best approach is to raise the question in the [#md2_methods Slack channel](#) and tag the study coordinators before making changes. This helps ensure consistency across sites while still allowing practical issues to be addressed appropriately.

Q For MD2, what should we do if a dog doesn’t eat the treat during a trial? Do we replace it with a new one for the next trial?

A No, if the dog does not eat the treat, simply leave it in place for the next trial. The main priority is keeping the procedure as consistent as possible across trials and sites.

Q For MD2, can parts of the setup be adjusted for local site needs, such as wall panels or dot height for smaller dogs?

A In some cases, yes, but only when the core structure of the task is preserved. For example, the methods discussion on Slack suggests that features like wall panels may be acceptable as long as the required spacing can still be maintained, and dot height may be adjusted when needed for very small dogs. In general, if you think your site requires a modification to the setup, it’s best to raise it in [#md2_methods](#) and confirm with the coordinators before proceeding.

RECENT ROUNDUP FROM MD LABS

News

Congrats to Hoi-Lam Jim, MD Assistant Director of Methods Development and Monitoring, for successfully obtaining a Travel Expenses to Abroad grant from the Future Development Research Funding Program of Kyoto University Research Coordination Alliance.

Recent Publications from our members

Schmid SM+, Sexton CL+, Yoerger A, Kauffman M, McClelland RL, D.A.P. Consortium, et al. (2026) **Accuracy of owner-reported diagnoses for dogs enrolled in the Dog Aging Project as compared to veterinary electronic medical records.** PLoS One 21(3): e0342427. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0342427>

The goal of this study was to evaluate the accuracy of owner-reported health diagnoses in dogs compared to veterinary electronic medical records (VEMRs) using data from the Dog Aging Project (DAP). Owners who are asked to report veterinary diagnoses are generally reliable in their report of the absence of health conditions across common disease categories, but discrepancies arise regarding the presence of specific diseases within categories. When conducting research on animal health and behavior outcomes, it's important to understand how and where we can rely on various sources of data.

Gnanadesikan, G.E., Bray, E.E., Levy, K.M., Horschler, D.J., Hargrave, S.H.S, Douglas, L.E.L.C., Kennedy, B.S., Watowich, M.M., Snyder-Mackler, N., & MacLean, E.L. (2026). **Characterizing the heritability of cognitive and behavioural traits across development in domestic dogs.** Royal Society Open Science, 13 (2), 241918. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.241918>

This study tested over 900 Canine Companions dogs as puppies and adults on the Dog Cognitive Development Battery and found that shy/bold temperament traits (like reacting to novel objects and surprising events) and interest in humans (like looking to a human when spoken to) had some of the highest pedigree-based heritability in puppies. Similar heritability estimates were found using a genomic-relatedness matrix in a subset of individuals (69% of puppies, 96% of adults). We also found that most heritabilities stayed stable or declined with age — a pattern distinct from humans, where cognitive heritability typically rises over development. It matters because it reveals which traits are most shaped by genetics during key developmental windows, with direct implications for how assistance dog programs might use selective breeding to improve training outcomes.

Salomons, H., Ferrans, M., Cusato, C., Moore, K., Woods, V., Bray, E.E., Kennedy, B., Block, T., Douglas, L., Roberts, A., Gruen, M, & Hare, B. (2026). **Longitudinal evidence for the emergence of multiple intelligences in service dog puppies.** Animal Behaviour, 232, 123410. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anbehav.2025.123410>

This study followed puppies from 8-20 weeks and found that different cognitive skills matured at different rates and times, rather than all at once. For example, while causal reasoning and executive functioning tasks (e.g., inhibitory control, reversal learning) were some of the latest to develop, inhibitory control showed rapid development, whereas causal reasoning was much more gradual. Interestingly, early socialization environment had little effect on these patterns. Furthermore, some skills were more impacted by repeated testing (e.g., inhibitory control, human interest, causal reasoning) than others (e.g., marker cue, memory, odor discrimination). This paper is the first to examine the development of dog cognition during this final period of rapid brain development, and shows dog intelligence is not one single ability.

Jonkoski, D.S., Douglas, L.E.L.C., Horschler, D.J., Klensin, A.M., Kennedy, B.S., MacLean, E.L., & Bray, E.E. (2026). **Indiscriminate sociality: puppies do not re-engage a human partner after joint social play is interrupted.** *Animal Behaviour*, 231, 123425. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anbehav.2025.123425>

This study tested whether very young puppies show signs of “joint intentionality”—the ability to share goals with a partner—by seeing if they attempt to re-engage a person after a shared activity is interrupted. While highly social, puppies differed from adult dogs in that they did not specifically try to reconnect with their previous play partner, suggesting this ability develops later. This matters because it shows that key aspects of cooperative social thinking emerge over development in dogs and may differ from humans, helping us understand what makes human social abilities unique.

USEFUL MANYDOGS LINKS

Resources & Links

Permanent resources:

- **How to Speak ManyDogs** Coming soon!
- **Internal Updates Archive** Coming soon!

This issue:

- **Submit News & Opportunities** <https://forms.gle/HrSQrwfjoMKuE9yw6>
- **Add to the MD Presentation Repository** https://ssp.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9oCFdkFMgeeWqI6
- **Share Canine Science Events and Conferences** <https://forms.gle/t5FYP55hJUPV7YQG6>
- **Subscribe to our curated conference calendar** [Google Calendar](#)

Thanks for being part of this community — we genuinely couldn't do it without you. And remember:

- *Presented on a ManyDogs-related topic recently? Log it in the Qualtrics form.*
- *Know of a conference or event? Add it to the community calendar.*
- *Have a job posting, opportunity, or field news to share? Tell us via the Google Form.*

See you soon!

The ManyDogs Communications and Community Building Team
Emily Bray | Hannah Burrows | Julia Espinosa | Lucia Lazarowski | Courtney Sexton