

AMSCOPE

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Research Reveals What Your Dog Is Really Thinking



By Hanie Elfenbein

I would love to talk to my dog—or at least know what he is thinking. Dr. Gregory Berns is trying to do just that. Berns, a researcher and physician at Emory University in Atlanta, has been doing the impossible since 2011. That is when he started studies with dogs trained to stay absolutely still in an MRI scanner to see how their brains respond to various tasks.

The same MRI machine that your doctor uses to look at your injured joints can be recalibrated to measure brain activity, a technique called functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). fMRI measures blood flow to different parts of the brain. The researchers then correlate that variation in blood flow to the tasks the dog (or human) performs to interpret what the dog thinks.

Your Dog Loves You as Much as Food

In one task constructed by Berns, the dogs were rewarded with either praise from their human or a food reward. When the results of all of the dogs were analyzed together, there

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was no difference in the magnitude of the response between the two types of rewards. That means that averaged together, dogs seemed to love food just as much as they loved their people. But when the results from each dog were analyzed individually, that's when everything became interesting.

As he described in his new book, "What It's Like to Be a Dog," Berns saw real personality differences between the dogs who volunteered for the study. Some were chow-hounds always searching for that extra morsel of food. Others sought approval from their people during the training phase of tasks. These differences were apparent in how the dogs' brains responded to the different types of rewards. This kind of confirmation that brain activity matches temperament makes way for more complex studies of canine cognition.

I have one of those dogs who is easy to read. He loves people and other dogs first and food is way behind, bringing up the rear. I can put food on the floor and he will sit and wait for the cue to eat it. But if a new person comes to visit, there is no holding him back. I know where he would fall in the spectrum of Berns's research dogs.

Understanding the Canine Thought Process

In his book, Berns describes several of his other recent studies, including that dogs recognize faces using a special part of the brain analogous to the structure in the human brain. Dogs have evolved alongside humans for thousands of years and have relied on their ability to read human emotions for their food and shelter. Therefore, it's illuminating but not surprising that dogs have a special part of their brain dedicated to facial processing.

Apart from dogs, Berns and his colleagues also study the brains of other animals, including dolphins, sea lions, and Tasmanian devils. Though that last species may seem like an odd choice, Berns was trying to better understand the extinct thylacine of the Australian continent. Very little is known about the thylacine, a wolflike marsupial driven to extinction by the sheepherders from its last stronghold in Tasmania in the early 1900s. Some believe a small population still exists in the wild backcountry of the island. In addition to satisfying his intellectual curiosity, Berns hopes that by studying preserved brains from museum collections he can shed light into the behavior of the animal. And, if there is an existing population, help field researchers locate the remaining individuals.

This kind of research into animal neuroscience, studying how animals think, has real utility, too. As Berns discussed recently with <u>The New York Times</u>, dogs raised to be service dogs undergo extensive and expensive training for years before they can be paired with a person. But Berns and his colleagues found that dogs who show more activity in areas of the brain associated with self-control are more likely to succeed at their training. Earlier screening would allow organizations who train service dogs to focus their energy on those puppies more likely to succeed.

The next frontier, in my opinion, is understanding what makes working dogs good at their jobs. What is it in the brain of a Border Collie that makes her so good at herding sheep or the brain of a Bird Dog that makes him so excellently focused on flushing quail? Just as many tests of conformation have helped improve the health of breeds, might prebreeding brain scans promote breed function and mental health?

As an advocate for shelter dogs, I would love to see brain studies applied to those dogs who need the most help finding homes. Not all dogs are cut out for participating in these kinds of studies. Berns and his colleagues spent years working with a very select group of dogs who were able to stay still and who wanted to participate. But I think all dogs can benefit from this kind of research that allows us to peek inside dogs' brains to learn a little bit of how they think.

Dr. Elfenbein is a veterinarian and animal behaviorist located in Atlanta. Her mission is to provide pet parents with the information they need to have happy, and healthy, and fulfilled relationships with their dogs and cats.

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Differentiating Between Pet Parents and

Pet Owners

By Natasha Feduik

Are you a pet owner, or do you see yourself as a pet parent? For me, I emotionally see myself as a "mom" to my fur babies. I have two dogs, a cat, and three birds, and they are my world. My life revolves around my four-legged and winged children. I provide their food, shelter, safety, education, and entertainment—not to mention love.

I spend most of my free time with my pets. We travel together, and we visit their "grandparents" and doggie "cousins." We even have family nights where all my energy is spent loving them, going for walks, playing with their toys, and snuggling on the couch.

I own many things, such as furniture, clothes, and cars, and I don't have this type of emotional attachment to those objects. But legally, I am a <u>pet owner</u>, and they are my property. I am responsible for their medical care and treatment, as well as humanely caring for and protecting them from neglect and abuse.

Pet Ownership vs. Pet Guardianship

In recent years, many states have entertained the idea of changing the term pet "owner" to "guardian." However, this would change many aspects of pet ownership. It would take certain rights away from people who have pets, and put the rights into the hands (or paws) of the animal.

There are many animal rights activist organizations that would like to see the law changed. And although the goal is to always act in the best interest of the pet, the problem is that the pet owner (or parent) could lose certain rights. Medical treatment options could be questioned by anyone other than the owner, including local, self-appointed experts. In addition, people could petition courts for custody of a pet, if they don't agree with the care or treatment being provided.

Though I want what's best for my "kids," I still want the right to develop an educated

decision, along with my veterinarian, as to what's in my pet's best interest. I do not want the state to have the power to tell me what's best for my pet.

Pets Are Part of the Family

I don't have human children; I choose to have pets as my family. I have had dogs, cats, birds, fish, ferrets, rabbits, you name it. I have cared for each one of them to the best of my ability, as I would a child. I see myself as their "mom," and I love them as so.

My pets are my responsibility, my right to own, and a large part of my life. Much of my time and energy is spent caring for, nourishing, and engaging my "kids." They sleep in my bed and eat off my plate. But when it comes down to it, I still own them.

I am happy that the law of animal ownership is on my side. I believe I know what's best for my pet. No one knows their needs and desires better than me, and I want to maintain the right to provide the best care that my veterinary team and I deem appropriate. And I want my property—and myself—protected by the law. In that manner, I am a proud pet owner. But I will always refer to my fur babies as my children.

Natasha Feduik is a licensed veterinary technician with Garden City Park Animal Hospital in New York, where she has been practicing for 10 years. Natasha received her degree in veterinary technology from Purdue University. Natasha has two dogs, a cat, and three birds at home and is passionate about helping people take the best possible care of their animal companions.



Just askin'.... Did you pay your dues?

Pet Visits in Hospitals: What Are the Risks?



By Hanie Elfenbein

Recently I read a story about a young woman who <u>snuck a dog into the hospital</u> to visit her sick grandmother. My first thought was, "that is so sweet!" But my second thought was, "I hope this doesn't become a trend." I love the idea that people can have their whole support system in the hospital, but I also believe that breaking the rules to do so is selfish. It puts other people at risk and is counter-productive toward convincing hospitals that pet owners are responsible.

As a dog mom, I know how much snuggles with my fur kid make me feel better. I want my dog around when I don't feel well—especially if I were sick enough to be in the hospital. In fact, research shows <u>dogs reduce anxiety in</u> <u>the hospital</u>, something that many people experience. Anxiety can slow healing, something that often effects my treatment plan for cats and nervous dogs at my own practice. I've even let a housemate stay with a hospitalized animal to reduce anxiety, when it was appropriate.

But I also know that there are a lot of good reasons the rules are in place prohibiting or restricting pets in the human hospital. Some hospitals allow personal pets to visit while others don't. If the hospital your family member is in does not allow personal pets, there are probably good reasons.

Why Hospitals Have Personal Pet Policies

When hospitals prohibit animals, they are doing so out of concern for the health of their patients. Some people in the hospital are very sick and may have compromised immune systems. Some may even have dog allergies. So, dog hair and dander may make these people feel worse or may slow their improvement. The hospital may not have adequate air filtration to handle pet dander or there may be other infrastructure concerns that prevent hospital administration from allowing pets.

After doing some research, I learned that more and more hospitals are allowing<u>animal</u> <u>visitation</u>. Many hospitals have their own therapy dogs who will visit patients. Others only allow service or therapy dogs. Those that do allow personal pets have <u>strict standards</u> for who they allow in. For example, a few hospitals will allow cats while others allow miniature horses that are used as service animals. Hospitals require that your companion animal be up to date on vaccines, house-trained, clean, and healthy. The dog must be quiet and good around strangers. The hospital should not be the first place you take your unsocialized dog.

Some hospitals have restrictions on which patients can bring their personal companions. These hospitals usually restrict visits to long-term patients (staying several months or more), patients who are at the end of their lives, or children. Some hospitals only allow visits in certain places in the hospital. This seems like a great compromise but of course requires patients to be able to leave their rooms.

To manage pet visitation, hospitals may have to add staff to screen dogs, which might require taking money out of the budget for nursing or sanitation staff or other services. This can be a powerful factor against allowing pets to visit.

To bypass this, there is a cool group in Canada that will help you check all the boxes for permission to bring your pet into the hospital. It's called <u>Zachary's Paws</u>. My favorite part of this group's work is that it will foster elderly patients' animals while they are in the hospital so that no one has to give up their beloved companion due to illness.

It is worth calling the hospital to find out whether it allows personal companion animals or get your loved one on the list for a visit from a therapy dog. If you have any choice in which hospital you use, choose one that does allow pets and tell the staff this was part of your decision process. If you or a loved one is in a hospital that doesn't allow pets, tell the hospital that you would like it to reconsider its policy. Hospitals are always looking for ways to improve patient satisfaction (it's now calculated into their reimbursements from Medicare and some insurance companies).

If you are in the unfortunate circumstance of having a loved one in the hospital, talk to your doctor and support staff. They want to help their patients get better and go home. And if a dog visiting speeds up the process, they just might let you bring your canine companion to the hospital.

SPECIALTY WINS

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BSS - Legacy's Pop Star/ Ledgerwood OSS - Legacy's Here Comes The Son/ Ledgerwood

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Sweet dreams for your dog.



When your dog starts dreaming, does he make soft sounds and wag his tail? Or does he sometimes snarl and growl in his sleep? Given that dogs dream, have you ever wondered if yours has nightmares as well?

"I Dreamed I Was Flying ... "

No one knows for sure what dogs dream about, but it's likely they're reliving aspects of their day. In an MIT experiment conducted years ago, researchers measured rats' electrical brain patterns while the rodents were running a maze. That night, during the rats' REM sleep, they measured the brain patterns again. They were identical, proving the animals were dreaming about the maze.

Your dog, then, probably dreams about all the important doggy events that happened during his day. He might be reliving chasing the squirrel or catching the tennis ball you tossed in the park. Dogs bred for specific tasks, such as flushing out game, may act out those behaviors during their dreams.

"I Showed Up for Obedience Class Totally Naked..."

"Dogs don't sit up and say, 'Mommy, I had a bad dream,'" jokes Stanley Coren, professor emeritus of psychology at the University of British Columbia. "But we make presumptions that the way humans have bad dreams, a dog will have a bad dream. A person is more likely to have a bad dream if they've had a bad day. They've had persistent bad feelings and that carries over into their sleep." Likewise, your dog may have upsetting dreams about going to the vet or the aggressive dog that snapped at him at the park.

If you familiarize yourself with your dog's typical sleep patterns, you may be able to pick up on cues that he's having a bad dream. Watch your dog for a few nights during the REM stage of his sleep cycle. REM stage usually occurs 10 to 20 minutes after falling asleep. (Watch closely because dog dreams don't last long--10 seconds for a toy dog and a couple of minutes for a large one!)

If you suspect a bad dream, don't wake him. Like humans, a dog that wakes from a dream can be disoriented and unable to differentiate between the dream and reality. During this time, even the gentlest dog can lash out and bite.

Ensuring Sweeter Dreams

Rather than interrupting the nightmare, try being proactive about avoiding bad dreams to begin with. The best way to avoid bad dreams? Socialize your puppy well.

"The puppy that gets better socialized tends to be less skittish," Coren says. "He'll be exposed to different people, sounds and experiences, and he'll see that these things won't bite him. This will reduce his overall stress level for the rest of his life. If you want to reduce the chances of your dog having bad dreams, give him a very enriched puppyhood." Of course, even a well-socialized dog can have a bad day. If your dog has had a stressful day, helping him relax in the evening may ward off a nightmare. An extra walk may tire him out and reduce tension.

You can also let him work at a treat-filled toy. While your dog is focusing on the toy, he's not thinking about his anxiety. Other approaches to help your dog relax include a pheromone diffuser and aroma therapy. Dog massage is an increasingly popular technique for helping dogs relax. Check out the American Animal Hospital Association's video on simple massage technique at https:// www.aaha.org.

Or simply spend some time cuddling and petting your dog before bedtime. Studies have shown the simple act of touching can reduce levels of cortisol, a stress hormone present in both humans and canines. At best, you'll help your dog avoid a nightmare. At worst, you'll have simply spent more time cuddling your dog--and maybe ensuring some sweet dreams for yourself.



If You Love Dogs, You'll Be Fascinated by This Study



By Dr. Becker

Have you ever wondered how much of your dog's behavior is nature (genetics) versus nurture (the environment and lifestyle you provide for him)? If so, you're not alone. It's a fascinating subject to all of us who love dogs, as well as scientists who study the<u>influence of genetics on</u> canine health and behavior.

One of the primary challenges of behavioral genetics studies is they require lots and lots of dogs as subjects. Securing such a large sample size with which to conduct standardized behavior testing is extremely expensive and time-consuming, so researchers are always looking for innovative workarounds.

Recently, a team of veterinary researchers in the U.K. decided to use a survey-based method to gather the data they needed from dog owners, since owners obviously have a significant amount of knowledge about their pets' behavior and personality traits.¹ This approach, which in the U.S. is often called citizen science research, also has the advantage of eliminating issues that can arise in accurate data collection when dogs are behavior-tested in an environment that is unfamiliar to them.

Study Involved Almost 2,000 UK Labrador Retrievers

For their study, the U.K. researchers recruited 1,975 Labrador Retrievers registered with the UKC (United Kennel Club). They used questions from the Canine Behavioral Assessment Research and Questionnaire (C-BARQ) to measure

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a dozen different personality traits, including: Agitated when ignored Fetching Ownerdirected aggression Attention-seeking Fear of humans and objects Separation anxiety

Barking tendency Fear of noises Trainability

Excitability Non-owner directed aggression Unusual behavior

A second questionnaire was used to compile data such as the age of each dog, gender and neuter status, coat color, housing, overall health, exercise and whether he or she was a gun dog, show dog or pet dog.

The researchers used the lineages of the dogs to gather genetic information, which involved 29 generations and nearly 30,000 individual dogs, as well as a different study using genomic methods and genetic markers. The research team looked for relationships between the 12 personality traits and aspects of the dogs' ancestries and genotypes.

Most Inherited Trait in Labrador Retrievers: Retrieving!

Interestingly, of the 12 traits, the two most often inherited turned out to be fetching and <u>fear of noises</u>. Aggression toward strangers and other dogs (but not owners) was also heritable. Also interesting is the potential role of the neurotransmitter dopamine in inherited behavior tendencies in dogs. According to the Genetics Society of America:

"Some of the variants associated with the personality traits were located near genes with known neurological functions. For example, dogs that were prone to agitation often carried a variant near the gene for tyrosine hydroxylase, which is involved in the synthesis of the neurotransmitter dopamine.

In humans, dopamine dysfunction is implicated in psychological conditions such as attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, and some variants of the tyrosine hydroxylase gene are associated with the tendency to experience negative emotions and excitability — both traits related to impulsivity."²

Since this study used only U.K. Labrador Retrievers as its subjects, the authors caution that results for other dog breeds may differ. But these results do suggest the potential for a strong genetic component to dog personalities, similar to human personalities.

Are You a US Dog Parent Interested in Becoming a Citizen Scientist?

Adam Boyko, Ph.D., is a dog geneticist at Cornell University who created <u>Embark</u>, sort of the Cadillac of doggy DNA tests. For \$199 you get a DNA swab test kit that generates a report revealing not only your dog's breed and ancestry, but also his or her risk for over 160 <u>genetic diseases</u>.

Brian Hare, Ph.D., is a canine cognition researcher at Duke University who owns <u>Dognition</u>, an online site that uses interactive games to assess the way your dog's mind works — how he thinks, learns and problem-solves. For \$19 you get a one-time assessment and profile report. For a \$79 annual charge, you also get monthly games and other goodies.

Boyko and Hare have formed a partnership to see if they can get 5,000 dogs in the U.S. signed up for both the Embark and Dognition products, which would allow them to conduct a large-scale canine behavioral genetics study.

"We know a lot more about the bodies of our dogs and how they can break down, more than what we know about their brains and behavior," Hare told the Washington Post. "The reason we do not know about genes involved with brain and behavioral problems is there has never been a large scale study combining behavioral and genetic data on thousands of dogs."³

Hare and Boyko believe one of the benefits of their collaboration will be helping dog parents better understand their pets. So-called "undesirable" behaviors are often rooted in a dog's genetics, and having knowledge of their pet's behavioral tendencies could help owners make adjustments to training, socialization and exercise habits to better meet their pet's needs. It might also help prospective pet parents make more informed choices when <u>adopting a dog</u>.

Establishing links between behavior, temperament and genetics in animals (including humans) is notoriously complicated and difficult. But some experts believe citizen science research projects are important because dogs evaluated in their own homes display more typical behaviors than dogs raised in laboratories.

Darwin's Dogs Is Another Citizen Science Research Project

Another citizen science research project currently underway to understand how specific genes control the behavior and health of our canine companions is Darwin's Dogs, led by Elinor K. Karlsson, Ph.D., a canine geneticist and assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

The Darwin's Dogs project is unique in that it doesn't focus on specific breeds or rely on DNA collected by scientists. Instead, Karlsson and her team are asking dog guardians to record their own observations of their pet's behavior and personality, and collect <u>doggy DNA</u>at home using mouth swabs provided by Darwin's Dogs.

Karlsson and her team collaborated with members of the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants (IAABC) to create several short surveys to gather pet owner information about their dog's diet, behavior, personality and more. The Darwin's Dogs project is open to all dogs — purebreds and mixed breeds, and of this writing, enrollment is approaching 14,000 dogs.

Dog Behavior Is the Result of Nature (Genes) + Nurture (Environment)

Karlsson is combining genetic data from the dogs and looking for changes in DNA that relate to particular behaviors. She believes adog's personality is shaped by both his life experiences and thousands of years of evolution.

"Have you ever known a dog who would retrieve the same ball over and over again, for hours on end?" asks Karlsson, writing for The Conversation. "Or just wouldn't stay out of the water? Or wasn't interested in balls, or water, but just wanted to follow her nose?"

Canine behavior traits are the result of hundreds of generations of artificial

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selection by humans, according to Karlsson. Breeders select dogs to breed based on, among other things, certain desirable behaviors, and in doing so make the genetic changes responsible for those behaviors more common in their gene pool.

"It won't be easy to match up DNA with an obsession with tennis balls, for instance," says Karlsson. "Behavior is a complex trait that relies on many genes." Complex traits can be the result of tens or even hundreds of different genetic changes, and in addition, a dog's environment plays a major role and adds to the complexity.

"This is a huge effort, but could offer huge rewards," writes Karlsson. "By figuring out how a genetic change leads to a change in behavior, we can decipher neural pathways involved in psychiatric and neurological diseases shared between people and dogs.

We already know these include not just anxiety, but also PTSD, OCD, autism spectrum disorders, phobias, narcolepsia, epilepsy, dementia and Alzheimer's disease."

Karlsson and her colleagues are investigating both canine behaviors and diseases. Their theory is that by locating the genetic changes that led to complex behaviors (e.g., retrieving) and perhaps even personality characteristics, such as playfulness, they can learn more about how brains work.

How to Participate in Darwin's Dogs

The way the process works is that each participating dog guardian fills out a survey. After doing so, he or she will receive a kit to collect a small amount of their dog's saliva to be used for DNA analysis. There's no cost to the dog owner, and the researchers share any information they find. If you want to learn more or enroll your own dog in the Darwin's Dogs citizen science research project, you can do so here (https:// darwinsdogs.org/).

A SIGNIFICANT LOSS TO THE BREED OF MINATURE SCHNAUZERS

Karth Barth of Karlshof Miniature Schnauzers passed away at his home on January 21, 2018 after a several month illness. He was with his family and schnauzer friends.

As a leader in Miniature Schnauzer breeding and showing, Karl lived in Knoxville. He had many successes in showing over the past fifty (50) years and was the proud owner and breeder of Champion Karlshof Kaptain Kidd who obtained his first major at eight (8) months. Karl, a former Professor of Animal Nutrition at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee, mentored many of us and was never shy to offer his opinion and or advise.

Karl was featured in the "From Ruff to Rep" *Miniature Schnauzers in America Since CH. MELDON'S RUFFIAN, A Half-Century of Breed Progress*, Miniature Schnauzer Publication by Dan Kiedrowski.



Ruth Ziegler (Allaruth Miniature Schnauzers) passed at age 98 on Feb 4. 2018 in California.

Her well lived life with her generous philanthropy to humanity and community and love of her MS will be her amazing legacy.

RIP, Ruth !





For some Clubs, Contact names and emails are definitely out of date. Some members of AMSC also need to update their information For the webpage, we want our local club information to be as up to date as possible. **Please check your** club's current listing on our web site and send any corrections to **Bonnie Keyes** (treasurer@amsc.us) and to Carla Borrelli (cborr@aol.com)

Thank you!

Missed Diagnoses: What to Do When You Think Your Vet Is Missing Something

By Jennifer

You know your pet best, but your veterinarian has more expertise when it comes to medicine. So what are pet parents supposed to do when they have a sneaking suspicion that their veterinarian has missed something? The answer: communication. In other words, talk to your vet!

Veterinarians are only human. As much as we hate to admit it, we can overlook things and make mistakes. Good vets understand this and are open to being questioned, but there's a right way and a wrong way to approach this conversation. Here are three recommendations for talking about the possibility of a misdiagnosis or treatment error with your vet.

Attitude Matters

If you want your veterinarian to be open to acknowledging that they could be wrong, you should be willing to concede the same thing. Perhaps the vet has made a mistake, but something else might be going on, too. Your pet's case may be especially difficult, require advanced testing, or they could be having an unusual response to treatment...the list of potential complications is almost endless. Go into the conversation with an open mind. You and your veterinarian are a team who can provide the best care for your pet when you work together.

That said, don't be afraid of offending your veterinarian. Any doctor who can't handle questions from an owner who obviously has their pet's best interests at heart isn't worth worrying about (or returning to).

Be Prepared

Your veterinarian is going to want to know what it is about your pet's situation that makes you think that they have missed something. Come prepared with a list of symptoms that worry you. Maybe something has changed or you've remembered something since the last time you spoke. Be sure to bring that up. Admit that you have consulted Dr. Google (We know you have. We do it too when it comes to our own health.) and bring up any conditions that you are specifically concerned about. Don't expect all of your questions to be answered on the phone. There is a very good chance that your vet will need to examine your pet and perhaps even run some new tests. A pet's condition can change rapidly, so what might not have been evident initially could be readily apparent at a recheck.

Go with Your Gut

If after all of this you are still worried about your pet's care, it's time for a second opinion. Ask your veterinarian if they think a referral to a specialist is in order, or if you'd rather not have that conversation, you can schedule an appointment for a second opinion yourself. Just make sure that you provide a complete copy of all your pet's medical records so the new veterinarian is up-to-date on the testing and treatment that has already taken place.

If your pet's symptoms are vague and relatively mild, you can make an appointment with a general practitioner. Ask around or look at online reviews to find a veterinarian who seems to be a good fit. If, however, your pet's condition is more serious, getting the services of a specialist would be best. The website <u>Vetspecialists.com</u> includes listings for specialists who are board-certified in surgery, internal medicine, cardiology, neurology, and oncology. Other types of specialists can be found through these links:

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Society for Theriogenology
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American College of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care A misdiagnosis can have serious consequences. Don't delay in getting your pets the care they need.



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In case you nissed it... Sue Phillips at Westminster Agility





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