



MATERNAL STYLE: HOW EARLY EXPERIENCES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH FUTURE OUTCOMES OF ASSISTANCE DOGS

Brenda S. Kennedy DVM MS

Director of Canine Health and Research

Canine Companions for Independence

Background

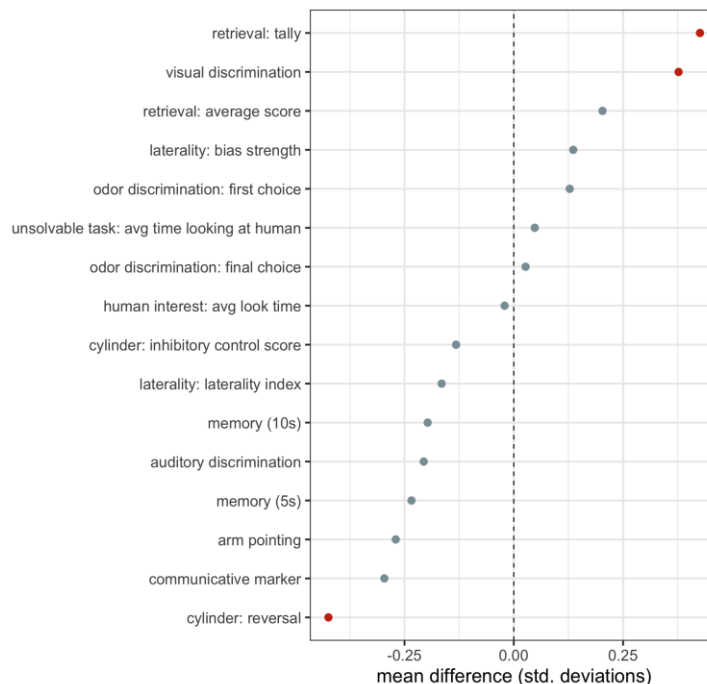
- Recent research in dogs has found that mothering style can be reliably characterized over the first few weeks of life and impacts puppies in multiple ways, including their exploratory tendencies, response to stress and temperament.

Methods

- Canine Companions for Independence:
 - Testing of 60 dams and 240 puppies over 2 years
 - Dams: Cognition and temperament testing and pre-pregnancy hormone levels
 - Filming dam with litter during first 3 weeks post-whelp to categorize interactions and behaviors
 - Puppies: 4 puppies from each litter participate in cognition and temperament testing at 8 weeks; hormone level screening
- Comparison of puppies reared in a volunteer Breeder Caretaker home vs on campus at a 24-hour staffed whelping facility (Canine Early Care Center)

Questions/Preliminary Results

- How does maternal style impact offspring behavior and outcomes in an assistance dog program?
- What is the effect of early rearing environment on maternal style and puppy phenotypes?
- Preliminary results: Most traits did not differ based on rearing environment, with a few exceptions:



Acknowledgements

- Funding: American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundation
- Arizona Canine Cognition Center
 - Drs. Evan MacLean and Emily Bray

