

Dog owners are 'happier than cat owners' - study

By Adam Boulton

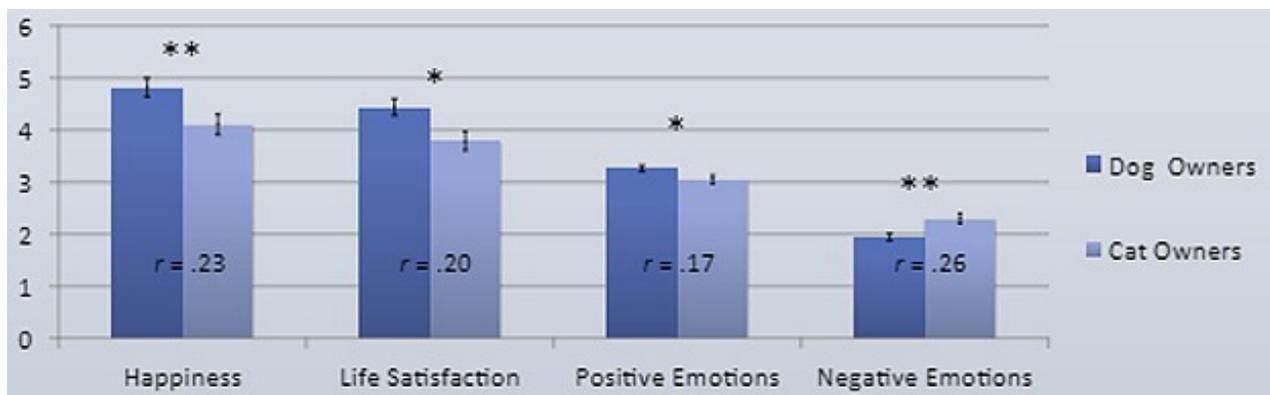
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Dog owners are happier, more conscientious and less neurotic than cat owners, according to researchers at Mahattanville College, New York.

In a new study, [Is Happiness a Warm Puppy? Examining the Relationship between Pets and Well-Being](#), academics surveyed 263 people in order to investigate the relationship between pet ownership and subjective well-being,

The results indicated that pet owners did not significantly differ from non-pet owners when it came to levels of happiness, positive emotions, negative emotions or major personality traits.

However, pet owners were found to be more satisfied with life than non-owners - and dog owners scored higher than cat owners on all measures of well-being.



Researchers said: "It's unclear whether the lack of differences between pet owners and non owners are due to adaptation to pet ownership or if pets do not have a strong effect on well-being.

"Dog owners were happier than cat owners, which can be partially explained by personality, emotion regulation style, and need satisfaction."

A [separate study](#) recently indicated that dogs love their owners more than cats do.

"We have pretty good evidence that dogs actually love their humans," said Dr Paul Zak, who conducted the study. "A couple of small-scale studies have shown that when owners interact with their dogs, the human and their dog appear to release oxytocin.

"It's one of the chemical measures of love in mammals. Humans produce the hormone in our brains when we care about someone. For example, when we see our spouse or child the levels in our bloodstream typically rise by 40-60 per cent."

The neuroscientist checked the oxytocin levels in both cats and dogs after playing with their owners.

He took saliva samples from 10 cats and 10 dogs on two occasions - 10 minutes before a playtime session with their

owners and immediately after - and tested both samples for oxytocin.

The results show the hormone increased by an average of 57.2 per cent in dogs but only by 12 per cent in cats.

This means in theory, [dogs love their humans](#) more than cats do.

"I was really surprised to discover that dogs produced such high levels of oxytocin... the dog level of 57.2 per cent is a very powerful response. It shows these dogs really care about their owners. It was also a nice surprise to discover that cats produce any at all. At least some of the time, cats seem to bond with their owners," he added.