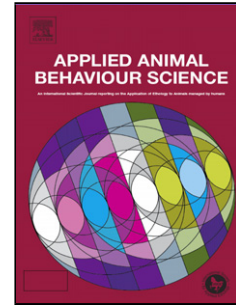


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Who to ask for help?**Do dogs form an opinion on humans based on skilfulness?**

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Highlights:

- Two studies used an unsolvable task to investigate reputation forming in dogs.
- First: dogs did not differentiate between a skilful and an unskilful experimenter.
- Second: dogs witnessed a skilled or unhelpful and friendly or ignoring experimenter.
- However, dogs looked longer at the experimenter if skilled, with a trend to significance.
- The results cannot confirm that dogs can use skilfulness to evaluate humans.

Abstract

Reputation is considered a fundamental mechanism for cooperation. Dogs can use their direct experience to form reputation judgments about humans that are either nice or not towards others, however it is unknown if dogs can take skilfulness into account when requesting human help. Here, we investigated reputation formation based on human skilfulness. In study 1, 32 adult pet dogs witnessed four blocks of two demonstration types: a *skilful* experimenter succeeded in solving a puzzle and obtaining food for the dog, while an *unskilful* experimenter failed. Each block was followed by an *unsolvable task* trial, where the dogs were presented a container baited with food that was inaccessible to the dog. During the task, the experimenters stood on either side of the container. Referential looks towards each experimenter were recorded. Dogs did not choose the skilful experimenter above chance

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