Title: Emotional Life of Dogs

Subtitle: 6 New Scientific Discoveries About Dog Emotions

Intro: Dogs are emotionally complex. Like humans, they experience a variety of feelings and even have the same brain regions for emotion as us.1

Heading: Emotional Development

Subheading: A 6 month old puppy has the emotional maturity of a 3 year old child 2

#1 Dogs Feel Depressed

Given unavoidable electric shocks, dogs gave up trying to escape and depressively accepted the pain. Like us, when dogs believe their situation is helpless, they get depressed.3

#2 Dogs Feel Jealous

Dogs showed jealousy when their owners played with an animatronic dog, but not when the owner read a book- an inanimate object. Like us, social interactions can cause jealousy in dogs.

#3 Dogs Feel Sympathy

In a room with their owner and a crying stranger, dogs left the safety of their owner to express sympathetic behaviors, like nuzzling and licking the stranger. Like us, they are aware of sadness and try to comfort.

#4 Dogs Feel Love...

Oxytocin, the love hormone, is produced during mother-child interactions and is responsible for bonding the pair. For dog-human pairs, 30 minutes of play increases oxytocin 130% in dogs and 300% in their owners. Like us, dogs desire connection and feel love in response.

#5 …And Dogs Fall In Love With Us Too

An owner’s scent activates a dog’s caudate nucleus-the brain region that lights up when we fall in love. This occurs even without expectation of food. Like us, dogs form strong bonds of love (and not just because we have treats!).

#6 Dogs Feel Resentment

In a test, dogs observed their owner needing assistance and a stranger refusing to help.  Then, the stranger offered treats to the dog. Dogs declined the treats out of loyalty to their owner. Like us, dogs get resentful and hold grudges.

\*What’s More?

-Barking is an emotional language; barks change based on what the dog is feeling

-Dogs can tell the difference between happy and sad faces, even on faces they’ve never seen before

-Dogs laugh! A type of panting has been identified as dog laughter. A recording played for puppies cause them to burst with joy. When played for shelter dogs, their stress behaviors decreased.

Sources:

1. Berns, G. (2013). How dogs love us: A neuroscientist and his adopted dog decode the canine brain. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
2. Nbv
3. ALLEVIATION OF LEARNED HELPLESSNESS IN THE DOG. SELIGMAN, MARTIN E.; MAIER, STEVEN F.; GEER, JAMES H. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, Vol 73(3, Pt.1), Jun 1968, 256-262.