

# New research shows that Collies can border on the impulsive

March 11 2016

---



Border Collies are on average more impulsive than Labrador Retrievers, according to new research published today (Thursday 10th March 2016).

When comparing working lines – groups within a breed that have been selected to perform a particular task for humans, such as herding sheep – Collies were found to be on average more impulsive than Labradors.

However the research, published in leading academic journal *Scientific Reports*, also found that there was no significant difference in levels of impulsivity between show lines of the two breeds. Show lines are bred

from animals which take part in dog shows and competitions, for example.

The study was undertaken by a group of researchers in the areas of [animal behaviour](#) and evolutionary genetics at the University of Lincoln. Data on 1,161 pure bred Border Collies and Labrador Retrievers using the Dog Impulsivity Assessment Scale (DIAS) – a dog owner reported questionnaire composed of 18 questions – was collected to analyse their temperaments.

Fernanda Fadel, an author on the study from the University of Lincoln's School of Life Sciences, explained: "Impulsivity can be described as the inability to delay reward gratification, and in dogs this may sometimes relate to problems such as [aggressive behaviour](#). Historically, Border Collies and Labrador Retrievers have been selected for working purposes requiring different levels of impulse control – livestock herding and gundog work respectively.

"Of course, it would be inappropriate to make predictions about an individual dog's behaviour only based on its breed, but our findings are extremely interesting. They highlight the varying temperaments of different breeds and also point to the impact that breeding for work or breeding for show can have on the personalities of our pets. We also saw a large variation among individuals of the same breed."

While the researchers found that working Collies were more impulsive than working Labradors, show lines of the two breeds did not significantly differ in terms of impulsivity. They therefore conclude that when appearance rather than behaviour becomes the primary focus for breeders (as in show lines), this may relax selection on behavioural traits and reduce average differences in impulsivity between breeds.

Further studies will now take place to explore these differences and

determine whether similar findings are also true for other breeds.

**More information:** Fernanda Ruiz Fadel et al. Differences in Trait Impulsivity Indicate Diversification of Dog Breeds into Working and Show Lines, *Scientific Reports* (2016). [DOI: 10.1038/srep22162](https://doi.org/10.1038/srep22162)

Provided by University of Lincoln

Citation: New research shows that Collies can border on the impulsive (2016, March 11)  
retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-03-collies-border-impulsive.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.