

Study to look at a dog's emotional attachment to toys

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Does your dog have an attachment to toys? If so, researchers from the University of Bristol Vet School and School of Psychological Science want to hear from dog owners for a new study on pets' attachment to toys.

The researchers are interested in [emotional attachment](#) to specific toys, like the behaviour seen in [young children](#) who form strong attachments to blankets and soft toys.

Bruce Hood, Professor of Developmental Psychology in Society in the School of Psychological Science, said: "Attachment objects provide a sense of comfort and security for [children](#) for whom these objects are irreplaceable. Children often treat their attachment object as if it has thoughts and feelings."

Past published research estimates the number of Western children who form emotional attachments to soft toys and blankets are around 60 per cent. Interestingly, childhood attachment objects are not typically seen in the Far East, where studies have reported much lower levels.

Research has also found that not all children form emotional attachments to soft toys. A recent twin study found that attachment toy ownership is half to do with genes and the other is to do with the environment—especially for those children who spent longer time away from their mothers.

Dr. Emily Blackwell, Director of Companion Animal Population Health at the Bristol Veterinary School, added: "Strong attachments to particular objects have been reported anecdotally by dog owners. This study is the first large-scale systematic survey of the phenomenon. The results will provide fascinating insights into the evolution of social behaviour in both [dogs](#) and their owners alike."

To take part in the Canine Attachment Study or for information about other dog science research, visit: <https://www.dogsciencegroup.org/>

Provided by University of Bristol

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