

Dancing monkeys of Pakistan found to have highly elevated levels of stress hormones

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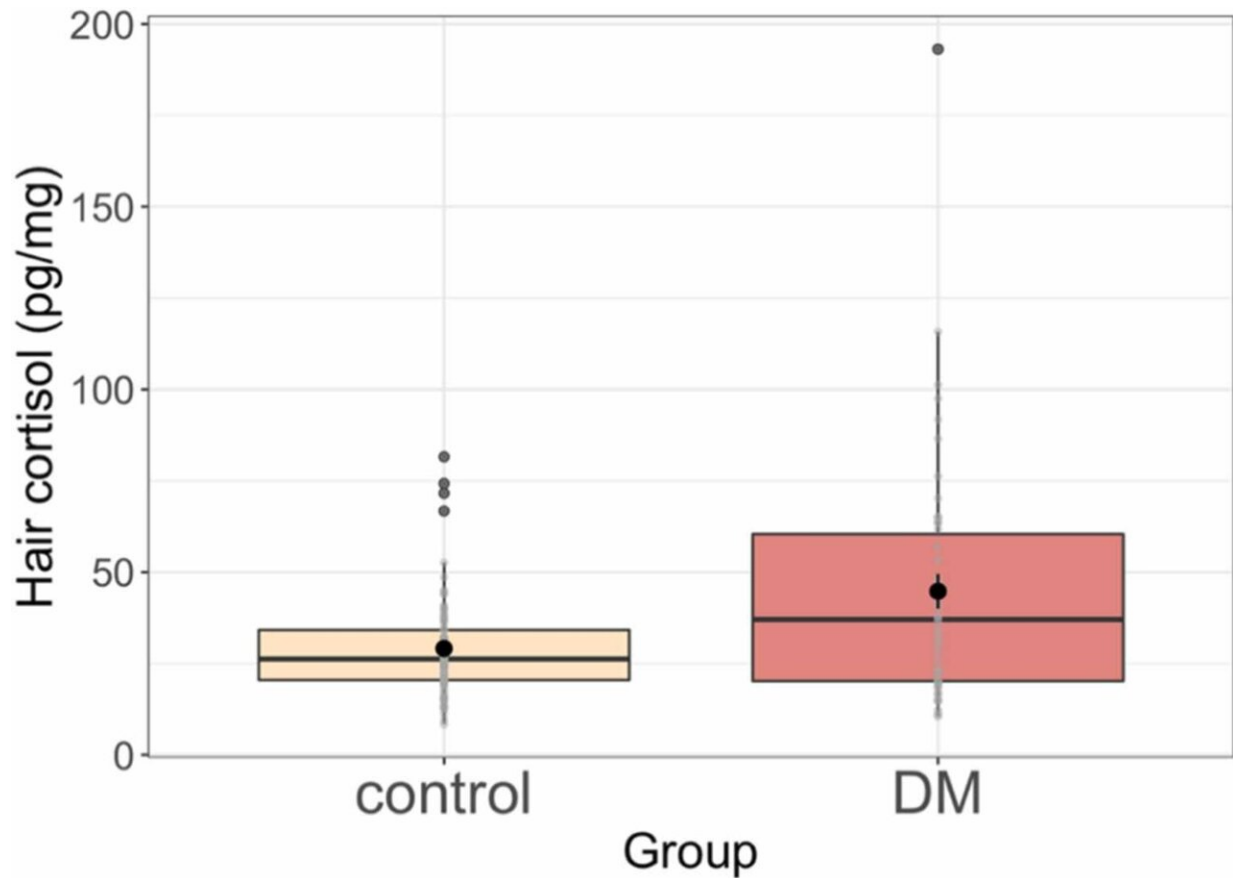
Image still from Dancing Monkey performance showcasing the training stick and rope used by the trainer. (Islamabad, 2018). Credit: *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* (2023). DOI: 10.1016/j.applanim.2023.106111

A pair of veterinary medicine specialists at the University of Glasgow has found that the famous dancing monkeys of Pakistan have highly elevated levels of stress hormones. In their study, [published](#) in the journal *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, Mishaal Akbar and Neil Price Evans, obtained and tested fur samples from tamed captive dancing monkeys in Pakistan and compared the level of stress hormones in them with similar monkeys living on a primate sanctuary in Florida.

The [rhesus macaque](#), known more commonly as the [rhesus monkey](#), is a species of small, old-world monkey typically weighing between 5.3 to 7.7kg. They are native to South and Central Asia and parts of the Middle East. Such monkeys are well known throughout the world due to their cuteness and intelligence as well as their use as pets, lab test animals and trained assets.

They have also been commonly used by some trainers to assist with earning money—in days past, they would appear with organ grinders as a means of goading passersby into tossing coins into a tin cup. In [modern times](#), many of them are known as part of an attraction in Middle Eastern countries such as Pakistan, where they have been trained to [dance](#). In this new effort, the researchers wondered about the impact of such activities on the little monkeys.

The monkeys are taken from their mothers while young and are taught to dance—typically in ways that are thought to be cute or humorous. They are always kept on leashes attached to a collar around their neck. Dancing typically takes place on sidewalks and street corners. As the monkeys dance, people who pass by are encouraged by the handler to make a donation. For many handlers, it is their only means of income.



Hair cortisol concentrations sampled from dancing monkeys (DM) and the control group (outdoor colony housed rhesus macaques). DM had significantly higher mean hair cortisol compared to the controls (p

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