

Dogs turn down extra food if a human provides the right cues

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Dogs can be manipulated to choose against their preference by human cues, opting to turn down extra food in order to follow the human's choice, according to results published Apr. 25 in the open access journal *PLoS ONE*. The work was led by Sarah Marshall-Pescini of the University of Milan.

In the study, the researchers offered [dogs](#) two different food serving sizes. In the absence of any outside influence, the dogs were unsurprisingly much more likely to choose the larger of the two. When a human expressed more interest in the smaller serving, though, for example by handling the food in the smaller serving, the dogs were more likely to choose the smaller serving.

This effect was not seen if the human expressed interest in the small serving simply by approaching the plate without handling it, highlighting the complexity of the dogs' response to different [human behaviors](#). These results provide further insight into dogs' social bias and their sensitivity to human cues.

More information: Marshall-Pescini S, Passalacqua C, Miletto Petrazzini ME, Valsecchi P, Prato-Previde E (2012) Do Dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*) Make Counterproductive Choices Because They Are Sensitive to Human Ostensive Cues? *PLoS ONE* 7(4): e35437.

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