

Exploring the dog-owner dyad: Lifestyle and hormones

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Background & Aim

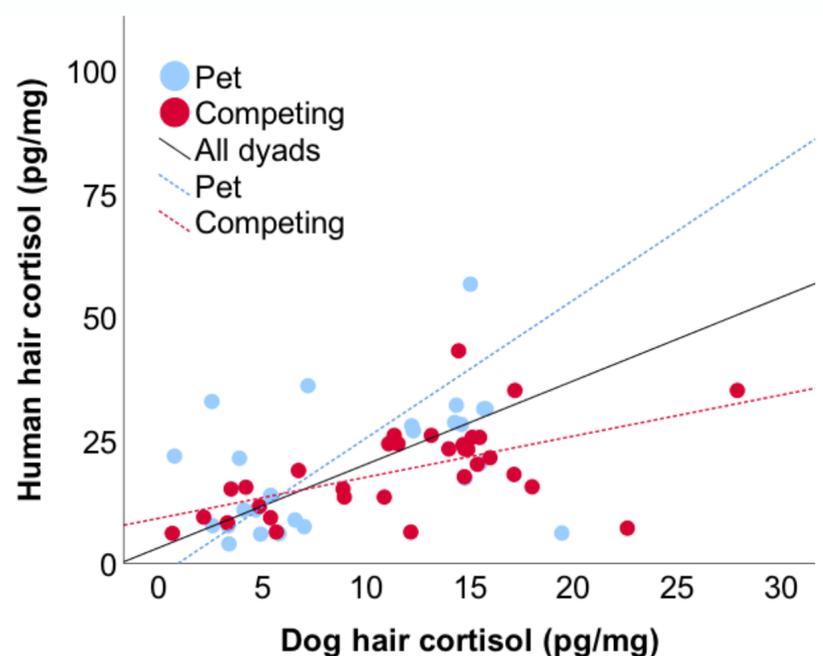
Dogs claim a prominent place in their owner's daily life which is full of potential stressors that can trigger acute and/or chronic (long-term) stress responses. Owners also frequently engage in shared activities with their dogs. Hence, the dog-owner relationship could be influenced by the lifestyle the dyad shares. The aim of this study was to investigate how lifestyle influences both acute (saliva) and long-term (hair) cortisol levels within dog-owner dyads.

Methods



Results

- A significant positive correlation was found between dog and owner hair cortisol levels
- Morning saliva cortisol and cortisol reactivity did not correlate within dog-owner dyads
- Competing dogs and dogs with high hair cortisol levels engaged in more Eye Contact behaviors
- Low cortisol level dogs showed longer play durations while high cortisol dogs tended to have longer physical contact durations with their owner



Conclusions

Hair cortisol levels correlated within dog-owner dyads; which is the first reported interspecies correlation with regards to long-term stress. Lifestyle only affected eye contact behaviors, this might be due to the quantity of training dogs received. The level of dog hair cortisol could reflect how attached a dog is to its owner.