

New Survey Confirms Dog Owners are Emotionally Connected to Their Dogs But Knowledge Gap May Exist About Healthy Aging in Their Canine Companions

Purina® Pro Plan® BRIGHT MIND® and Dognition® Are Helping Owners Understand Canine Cognition with Free Online Tools

ST. LOUIS, Aug. 17, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- Does your dog stare at you for no apparent reason? Does he bark to get your attention? If so, you may be witnessing his cognitive skills in action, even if you didn't know it. A new online survey¹ of dog owners from Purina Pro Plan, a leader in canine nutrition, asked one-thousand dog owners about healthy aging, their bond with their pet, canine brain health and nutrition to better understand consumers' knowledge about canine health and well-being.

Not surprisingly, the survey confirmed that the bond that owners share with their dogs is strong – nine out of 10 respondents feel they know at least a little bit about the way their dog thinks, learns and problem solves, and 86 percent are interested in learning about their own dog's cognitive style. Purina Pro Plan and Dognition have teamed up to help dog owners learn about their dog's cognitive style and nourish his mind with the brain-supporting nutrition in Purina Pro Plan BRIGHT MIND formulas. Dognition is an innovative online platform that offers fun, science-based cognitive games that reveal the unique way each dog sees the world. Starting this month and while supplies last, purchase any specially-marked bag of Purina® Pro Plan® BRIGHT MIND® dry dog food to receive an exclusive access code inside for a **FREE** Dognition® Assessment, a \$19 value. Dog lovers are invited to visit www.dognition.com/brightmind to learn more and play select Dognition games for free.

Other key survey findings include:

The Human/Dog Relationship

- Survey results indicated that while owners feel emotionally connected to their dogs – 91 percent consider their dog a member of the family and more than half describe their dog as their best friend – they are misinformed when it comes to some basic facts about their canine companions, including their brain health. In fact, only 18 percent of owners surveyed knew that dogs are considered "senior" around age seven, an age when changes in the glucose metabolism in the brain can affect canine cognition.

Recognizing Cognitive Behaviors

- While only 26 percent of dog owners surveyed reported being familiar with canine cognition, many were able to recognize the elements of cognition, agreeing that dogs are empathetic and capable of reading and responding to the emotions of others (75 percent) or that dogs are capable of storing past experiences or memories to make future choices (74 percent).
- Most survey respondents unknowingly had also observed a dimension of canine cognition in their dogs – 86 percent said their dogs stared at them for no apparent reason (a sign of empathy) and 95 percent reported that their dog barked to get their attention (a sign of their communication style).

The Knowledge Gap

- The survey indicated that there's a gap in knowledge among dog owners on topics related to brain health and healthy aging. While dog owners cited brain health as one of the most important aspects of their dog's health, only 30 percent were aware that as dogs age, the glucose metabolism in their brain changes, potentially leading to changes in behavior.
- When these changes are most likely to occur was also an area for education – more than 40 percent of dog owners surveyed mistakenly believe the label of "senior" applies at the age of 10 or older, versus age seven.
- Despite this, almost all dog owners surveyed (97 percent) feel it is important to take steps to keep their dog's brain healthy throughout their life, and 94 percent believe that nutrition can positively impact a dog's cognitive health.

Is Your Dog's Food Feeding Your Dog's Brain?

Purina Pro Plan discovered a way to help promote brain health through nutrition, introducing Purina Pro Plan BRIGHT MIND® Adult and Adult 7+ dry formulas that feature a proprietary blend of brain-supporting nutrients for adult and senior dogs seven and older. Around age seven, the glucose metabolism in a dog's brain begins to change, which can affect memory, learning, awareness or decision making. Purina Pro Plan BRIGHT MIND Adult 7+ formulas feature enhanced botanical oils shown to promote alertness and mental sharpness in dogs seven and older to naturally nourish their minds and help them think more like they did when they were younger.

"We know owners are looking for ways to help their pets live healthy lives," said Robert Miller, Brand Director at Purina Pro Plan. "That's why Purina Pro Plan is proud to introduce innovative products like Pro Plan BRIGHT MIND formulas, which are helping to make a difference in the cognitive health of dogs."

Purina Pro Plan BRIGHT MIND formulas are available at pet specialty retailers nationwide and on Amazon.com. For more information, visit www.BRIGHTMINDEFFECT.com.

About Purina Pro Plan

*Purina Pro Plan is the food of choice for the past 10 Westminster Best in Show winners.** Our goal is to give your dog the nutrition to be his absolute best, helping him to be energetic and resilient, and maintain an ideal body condition, healthy skin and a stunning coat. Because being the best he can be means something different for every dog, our wide range of dry and wet foods, snacks and supplement bars, sold exclusively at pet specialty stores, can be found in five specialized categories formulated for a dog's unique needs. For more information, visit www.proplan.com or follow @ProPlan on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Vine or Google+. The brand is manufactured by Nestle Purina PetCare, which promotes responsible pet care, humane education, community involvement and the positive bond between people and their pets. A premiere global manufacturer of pet products, Nestle Purina PetCare is part of Swiss-based Nestle S.A., a global leader in nutrition, health and wellness.*


***Owners or handlers may have received food or compensation as a Purina ambassador*

¹ Purina Pro Plan online survey of 1,013 dog owners 18 years or older, fielded July 24-28, 2016 by Propeller Insights.

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For further information: Kelsey Sherman, WME IMG, 424-653-1880, kelsey.sherman@img.com; Emily Goldkamp, Nestle Purina PetCare, 314-982-1698, emily.goldkamp@purina.nestle.com

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