

W hat is New Scientist Live?

NSL describes the event as ‘the world’s greatest festival of ideas and discoveries’. No matter your age or interests there is something for everyone, with a line-up of inspiring expert speakers and an exhibition hall packed with interactive activities. The event runs over three days, with the Friday dedicated to school pupils ahead of the weekend when everyone is welcome. Previous events have attracted 40,000 attendees!

Why did we want to exhibit at New Scientist Live?

This was our first time exhibiting at NSL and we were keen to introduce a new audience to dog behaviour and welfare science. Most of the attendees we spoke to were not aware that Dogs Trust has a Research Team, so it was also a great opportunity to present ourselves as the leader in this field and spark curiosity about dog-related research.

What was on offer at our stand?

With support from colleagues across the Canine Behaviour & Research Directorate and beyond, we devised evidence-based activities to educate visitors on topics including dog body language and obesity, whilst promoting various Dogs Trust research projects.

Using a shaping game (similar to games like “Hot and Cold” you might have played as a child), we taught visitors about markers and how to introduce these into dog training.



Building on our own research that 3 in 4 dog GIFs feature dogs showing signs of anxiety or being anthropomorphised, we designed a GIF survey in which participants were challenged to identify “positive” or “negative” ones. You can play it yourself [here](#).

We also used the opportunity to tell people about Generation Pup, our longitudinal cohort study. Schoolchildren who attended the event on Friday and took part in the “Science Trail” were tasked with visiting a number of specific stands (including ours) in order to ask a question which enabled them to complete their works sheet. As a result, 384 schoolchildren approached us to ask about the number of faecal samples collected by Generation Pup. Talking about dog poo (and what we can learn from it) was a great conversation starter for children and adults alike!



Visitors to our stand could also play “guess the most popular dog name” game (based on the findings from the National Dog Survey). As the most popular name are also common human names (Poppy and Alfie), the game helped us to start conversations about the role of pet dogs in our families.

Using a poster presenting findings of the Walk This Way intervention, designed to reduce dog fouling, we talked to the stand visitors about Dogs Trust work within communities. The poster was also a springboard to conversations about the importance of human behaviour change principles as well as impact evaluation in Dogs Trust’s work.

How did it go?

Over the course of the weekend, we engaged with just over 800 people! More than half of them were school-age children. Approximately 500 people learnt about Generation Pup and the National Dog Survey and 100-120 people played our clicker game. The GIF game was played by 32 people. We received many questions about our rehoming process, and it was great to talk to the members of the public about our mission to revolutionise rehoming. In this context, we were able to chat with people about the Post Adoption Project and Post-Adoption Welfare Study. We were impressed and touched by the depth of conversations we had with the members of the public over the weekend. The questions we received ranged from asking about the power analysis calculations we carry out ahead of research projects, to questions about things we want to learn about using Generation Pup data, how dog behaviour changes post adoption, the support we offer to adopters after rehoming, best ways to find a behaviourist or a trainer, the impact of human mental health on dog care/wellbeing, between-breed differences in dog behaviour, dog's microbiome, and the biggest dog poo we've ever seen.

