

Dogs are 'smarter than cats'

Dogs are cleverer than cats because their friendly character has helped them develop bigger brains, a study set to end the argument between pet lovers has shown.



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Researchers have discovered that cat's brains are smaller because they are less social Photo: REX
By [Peter Hutchison](#) 7:00PM GMT 22 Nov 2010

The intelligence of “a man’s best friend” has evolved at a greater rate than the less social cat over millions of years, scientists at Oxford University have claimed.

It was often thought that the feline pet was smarter than its canine counterpart because it needed less attention but researchers have discovered that cat’s brains are smaller because they are less social.

For the first time scientists have charted the evolutionary history of the brain across different groups of mammals over 60 million years and identified huge variations in how their brains have changed.

They found that there was a link between the size of an animal's brain in relation to the rest of its body and how socially active it was.

The study analysed available data on the brain and body size of over 500 species of living and fossilised mammals. The brains of monkeys grew the most over time followed by horses, dolphins, camels and dogs.

It found that groups of mammals with relatively bigger brains tended to live in stable social groups. The brains of more solitary mammals such as cats, deer and rhino, grew much more slowly during the same period.

Previous research had suggested that the growth rate of the brain relative to body size followed a general trend across all animal groups.

The study published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences overturns this view, showing there is a wide variation in patterns of brain growth across different groups of mammals and not all of them have larger brains – suggesting social animals had to think more.

Dr Susanne Shultz, who led the research, said: “Dogs have always been regarded as the more social animals while cats like to get on with their own thing alone. But it appears that interaction is good for the brain and extends to other species, like ourselves.

“We are even more social than monkeys and apes and it is this ability to get on with each other that has helped us dominate the planet.

“This study overturns the long-held belief that brain size has increased across all mammals. Instead, groups of highly social species have undergone much more rapid increases than more solitary species.

“This suggests the co-operation and co-ordination needed for group living can be challenging and over time some mammals have evolved larger brains to be able to cope with the demands of socialising.”

Dr Shultz added: “All dogs are quite good at solving problems, which gives credence to the traditional image of the cunning fox which is a member of the same family. Dogs descended from wolves which appear to have the biggest brains as they live in large family groups.”