

Key Facts about the Brain Health Study



- The Brain Health Study (BHS) is a nationwide study being conducted by the Dog Aging Project to investigate the potential links between Alzheimer’s disease and a similar condition in dogs called canine cognitive dysfunction (CCD).
- An estimated 6.2 million Americans 65 and older live with Alzheimer’s, a brain disorder that slowly destroys memory and thinking skills, and eventually, the ability to carry out simple tasks.
- Like in humans, cognitive decline occurs with age in dogs, and some individuals develop clinical dementia. CCD is a well-characterized behavioral syndrome in older dogs that is defined by the development of symptoms similar to those observed in Alzheimer’s patients. CCD may be as prevalent as 35% in dogs older than age 8.
- The lead researchers on the Brain Health Study are:
 - **Dr. Marta Castelhana**, DVM, MVSc, Director of the Cornell Veterinary Biobank & Dog Aging Project Biobank, Cornell University
 - **Dr. C. Dirk Keene**, MD, PhD, Professor, Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology, University of Washington School of Medicine
 - **Dr. Stephanie McGrath**, DVM, MS, Associate Professor of Neurology, Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital
- BHS is funded by the National Institute on Aging, a part of the National Institutes of Health, and is being conducted in collaboration with the Cornell University Veterinary Biobank.
- Participating dogs are members of the Dog Aging Project Pack and have completed the Health and Life Experience Survey, which collects information about diet, activity, behavior, home environment, health history and more.
- Participants interested in donating their dog’s body to science should live within driving distance from the participating clinical sites where the postmortem will be performed. As of 2023, these sites include Cornell University, University of Washington, and Colorado State University.
- All samples collected as part of BHS will be banked at the Dog Aging Project Biobank.
- Participation in the Brain Health Study is voluntary and donation at the end of the dog’s natural life is optional. All dogs enrolled in this study live and play at home with their families.