



# Puppy Super Powers!



**Heartland  
Humane**  
shelter & care



Dogs have been man's best friend for thousands of years.

All dog owners believe their dog is uniquely special and smart.

But, what do you really know about your furry (or furless) pup, and do you know what's going on inside their heads?

Through research, we have found our pups really do have “Super Powers”, or abilities that remind us just how smart they are, and how special our relationship is with them...





## Dogs feel empathy...

Have you ever wondered why you yawn when you see someone else yawn? Well, this is an example of “emotional contagion” - a phenomenon where another’s emotions trigger similar emotions in yourself. This is a basic form of empathy.

Research has shown that dogs, like humans and other primates, can “catch” yawning from others.

Dogs are believed to empathize with us in other ways as well. Dogs are sensitive to their guardians’ emotions. Their behavior is much influenced by the expression (body language) of those emotions. They can sense when we are mad, sad, and happy.

So, the next time you are sad, your dog may be right by your side feeling those same emotions. And next time you yawn, see if your dog yawns too...





## Dogs make eye contact...

Dogs are the only non-primate animal to look people in the eyes without misinterpreting what it means.

Other animals, like wolves, interpret eye contact as a sign of hostility.

Much like humans, when dogs make eye contact, there is an increase of oxytocin - the “love hormone”. This hormone plays an important part in attachment-forming and trust - facilitating bonds that occur only between parents and their children, or romantic partners.





## Dogs know we are their family...

Dogs rely on their sense of smell to help them figure out the world around them. It is connected to memory, and affects their likes and dislikes.

Studies have shown that when a dog is processing its owner's odor, the "reward center", or caudate nucleus, lights up. Dogs learn to prioritize their human's smell over other smells.

Behavior research also suggests that dogs are the only domesticated animals that interact with their humans in similar ways to how babies interact with their parents.

Typically, when dogs are scared or worried, they will run to humans for help and comfort, while cats will simply run and hide.





## Dogs can understand us...

When it comes to understanding gestures, dogs and young children start around the same level. If you point to an object, both are able to interpret the hand movement and find the object, especially when the object is a reward.

Dogs are also able to read subtler gestures, or social cues, like a human gaze to find hidden objects.

Dog brains have voice areas and they process voices in the same way human brains do. Dog brains also respond when hearing emotional sounds, such as crying or laughter.

Dogs also use a process called “fast-mapping”, or inference to understand different sounds or words, which is the same way children learn language.





## **Dogs are Super Heroes!**

Now that we know how dogs feel, learn, and behave, we can use their help in many new ways.

Today, more and more dogs are called to duty to help guide, protect, lead, and save human lives.

They truly are a “Man’s Best Friend”!

**Now show us what your ideal  
“Super Pup” looks like!**

**Submit a drawing of your “Super Pup” on our  
website or social media, and be sure to include  
its name and super powers!**

**\*Information Credit to Simone M. Scully**

<https://www.businessinsider.com/special-abilities-that-show-how-smart-dogs-are-2016-6>