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Testing the myth: Cooperative dogs and aggressive wolves

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Recent theories on the evolutionary origins of dogs' extraordinary cooperativeness propose that their tamer, more tolerant temperament in comparison to wolves allowed for accepting humans as social partners and subsequently the development of their human-like social skills. By testing similar raised and kept dogs and wolves in cognitive tasks with conspecific and human partners, we found that wolves, if intensively socialized, also accept humans as social partners in social learning tasks and that they perform at least as well as dogs. Moreover, by comparing their tolerance and aggressiveness when competing over food, dogs appear to have a steeper dominance hierarchy than wolves, which also allows human partners to inhibit dogs from taking easily available meat. Finally, cooperation experiments demonstrate that wolves easily cooperative with conspecifics, while dogs fail. Our results are best explained by the *intraspecific canine cooperation hypothesis* proposing, on the one hand, a cooperative and tolerant view of wolves, which might have served as the evolutionary origin of dog-human cooperation and on the other hand, the evolution of an enhanced sensitivity of dogs to social inhibition leading them to more readily accept their social partners' – human or conspecific - leading role than wolves. Selection for this sensitivity and reduced fear of humans, suggested by former hypotheses, might have been a parallel process during domestication.