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**The Physical and Affective Wellbeing Study of Dog Owners (PAWS) Pilot Study**

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT**

You have been invited to participate in this study because you have indicated an interest in adopting a dog. This Participant Information Statement tells you about this research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

**(1) What is this study about?**

This study aims to understand the influence of acquiring a dog (through adoption or purchase) on the owners' health and wellbeing.

**(2) Who is running the study?**

The study is being carried out by Associate Professor Emmanuel Stamatakis, The University of Sydney

**(3) What will the study involve for me?**

As a participant of this study, you will be asked to complete a set of measurements three times: at the beginning of the study and three and eight months later. The measurements will involve meeting with a researcher at a place and time suitable to you, followed by a phone interview and your mailing materials in pre-paid envelopes to the researchers. The measurement set will be conducted at each time point.

**(•) QUESTIONNAIRE**

A questionnaire will be used to collect information on your general health status, psychosocial status, health behaviours, socio-demographic characteristics, pet ownership, and your dog's behaviour.

**BIOLOGICAL SAMPLES AND MEASUREMENTS**

- You will be asked to wear an activity monitor for 7 days to measure your physical activity. This small device is worn on front of the thigh, like a step counter. It can be worn during all daily activities (including during water sports) and during sleep without discomfort.
- You will be asked to provide saliva samples to measure cortisol and oxytocin, biological indicators of stress and social bonding, respectively. The saliva samples are collected by chewing a piece of cotton and placing the cotton in a tube and by expectorating through a straw into a tube.
- You will be asked to do a 3 minute step test to measure cardiorespiratory fitness.
- Your fasting blood glucose level will be measured via a finger prick test.
- Your resting blood pressure will be measured.
- (Dog owners during the duration of the study only) You will be asked to attach a monitor to your dog's collar for 14 days. Similar to your activity meter, this monitor is a small light-weight device worn on the dog's collar to measure its physical activity and sleep.
- (Dog owners during the duration of the study only) You may also be asked to use a real-time smartphone app for tracking dog behaviour for 7 days.

(Dog owners during the duration of the study only) You may be asked to delay dog adoption/purchase of a dog. This short (3-8 months) delay is completely optional and it will not result in more measurements.

**(4) How much of my time will the study take?**

It is estimated that each participant will need to spend about 40-60 minutes active time for each measurement set, so between 2 and 3 hours in all.

**(5) Who can take part in the study?**

To be eligible to take part in this study, you must be aged 18 years or older; reside in NSW; intend to be the primary or joint carer of a dog you plan to adopt/buy; not currently own any dogs, nor have owned any for at least one year, nor have surrendered a dog in the last 3 years; not own furry pets (e.g. cats) nor be planning to acquire such pet or another dog for the duration of the study; and be free of physical limitations that prevent walking the dog.

In addition, your dog must meet certain criteria, including that it has no veterinary conditions that would limit low intensity activities such as walking, and that it be at least six months of age but not yet entered the last quintile of expected lifespan for the given breed.

**(6) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?**

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary – neither you nor your dog are under any obligation to consent and, if you do consent, you and your dog can withdraw at any time without affecting your current or future relationship with the University of Sydney or any of the participating animal shelters and researchers. Please note that the compensation for your participation will be offered upon completion of the study, as described below.

**(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?**

We do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study outside of those inherent to dog ownership. In taking part in this study you assume all the rights and responsibilities of dog ownership. In an unlikely event of an adverse event associated with dog ownership, you understand that University of Sydney is not responsible.

**(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?**

We cannot guarantee that you or your dog will directly benefit from being in the study, but the results may promote the causes of animal welfare organisations and dog adoption centres by leading to increased dog adoption numbers. You will not be paid for participating in the study but you will receive \$150 as compensation (if you are in the community control group) or a supply of routine veterinarian medicines (flea and tick treatment, essential vaccinations, and parasite control) upon completion of your participation in the study.

**(9) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?**

Once your information has been collected, it will be de-identified and stored securely at the University of Sydney data management server. Biological samples will be stored in a de-identified manner in appropriate University facilities (e.g. a locked freezer). Your information and samples will only be accessed by the study researchers and only used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. Your identity/information will be kept strictly confidential. Study findings may be published, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications.

**(10) Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes, we encourage you to tell other people about the study.

**(11) What if I would like further information about the study?**

If you have questions or would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Associate Professor Emmanuel Stamatakis via email ([emmanuel.stamatakis@sydney.edu.au](mailto:emmanuel.stamatakis@sydney.edu.au)) or telephone (02 8627 1867).

**(12) Will I be told the results of the study?**

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study at its conclusion. This feedback will be in the form of a one-page summary, outlining the main findings of the study.

**(13) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?**

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney protocol number 2016/921. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- **Telephone:** +61 2 8627 8176
- **Email:** [ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au](mailto:ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au)
- **Fax:** +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

**Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Animal Welfare Veterinarian, University of Sydney on (02) 8627 8132 (Telephone).**

*This information sheet is for you to keep.*

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## PARTICIPANT CONSENT

I, .....[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

**TITLE: The Physical and Affective Wellbeing Study of Dog Owners (PAWS) Pilot Study**

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

- I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher(s). The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
  - I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
  - I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney, Animal Medical Association, RSPCA, PetRescue, Animal Welfare League, or any other organisation that was involved in this study now or in the future.
  - I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity without my permission. I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.
  - I understand that I alone am responsible for the rights and responsibilities, including veterinary care, associated with dog ownership.
  - If I adopt a dog, I agree to have my dog participate in this study, with the proviso that information about my dog is treated similarly to my information (as described above) and the dog's involvement is voluntary and may be withdrawn (as described above).
- By ticking this box, I indicate I wish to receive a one-page summary about the overall results of this study at its conclusion at email: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Name:** .....

**Signed:** .....

**Date:** .....