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# The influence of relationships on neophobia and exploration in wolves and dogs

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### Highlights

- We tested neophobia and exploration in dogs and wolves.
- Dogs were quicker to approach, but showed less interest in, novel objects.
- Presence of conspecifics enhanced approaches to, and exploration of, novel objects.
- Our findings suggest risk sharing mediates cooperation in wolves and dogs.

â€¢ We assume the differences between wolves and dogs to be an effect of domestication.

Exploration is important for animals to be able to gather information about features of their environment that may directly or indirectly influence survival and reproduction. Closely related to exploration is neophobia, which may reduce exposure to danger, but also constrain explorative behaviour. Here we investigated the effects of social relationships on neophobia and exploration in wolves, *Canis lupus*, and dogs, *Canis familiaris*. Eleven pack-living wolves reared by human foster parents and 13 identically raised and kept dogs were tested in a novel object test under three different conditions: (1) alone, (2) paired with a pack mate and (3) together with the entire pack. Dogs were less neophobic than wolves and interacted faster with the novel objects. However, the dogs showed overall less interest in the novel objects than wolves, which investigated the objects for longer than the dogs. Both wolves and dogs manipulated objects for longer when paired or in the pack than when alone. While kinship facilitated the investigation of novel objects in the pair condition in both wolves and dogs, rank distance had opposite effects. Our results suggest that the presence of conspecifics supported the exploration of novel objects in both wolves and dogs, particularly within kin and that this may be interpreted as risk sharing. The reduced latency to approach objects and less time spent exploring objects in dogs compared to wolves may be interpreted as an effect of domestication.



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## Keywords

dog; domestication; exploration; neophobia; relationship; wolf

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