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Reading to Rover

Kids, dogs and a good book are a great combination, according to researchers in UC Davis' School of Veterinary Medicine — and they have the data to back that up.

It has been recognized anecdotally that children become better readers when they regularly read aloud to dogs, and many animal organizations and libraries around the country have developed reading programs that pair up kids and dogs. One such program is the All Ears Reading Program, an animal-assisted therapy program developed by Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation of Walnut Creek.

Hoping to collect scientific data related to the observed successes of reading-to-dogs programs, the foundation and researchers from the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine collaborated on two studies.

The first study explored changes in reading skills among third graders in a public school and the second study focused on home-schooled students. Researchers found that the kids' reading fluency improved by 12 percent in the first study and by 30 percent in the second study.

"The dogs, in contrast to a human, don't judge the individual, aren't grading the individual," said Martin Smith, a veterinary school science educator and lead researcher on the study.

http://ucdavismagazine.ucdavis.edu/issues/su10/news_notes.html#news_4

<http://www.paws4healing.info/>

http://www.therapyanimals.org/documents/READ_BrochureFINAL%202009forprinting.pdf