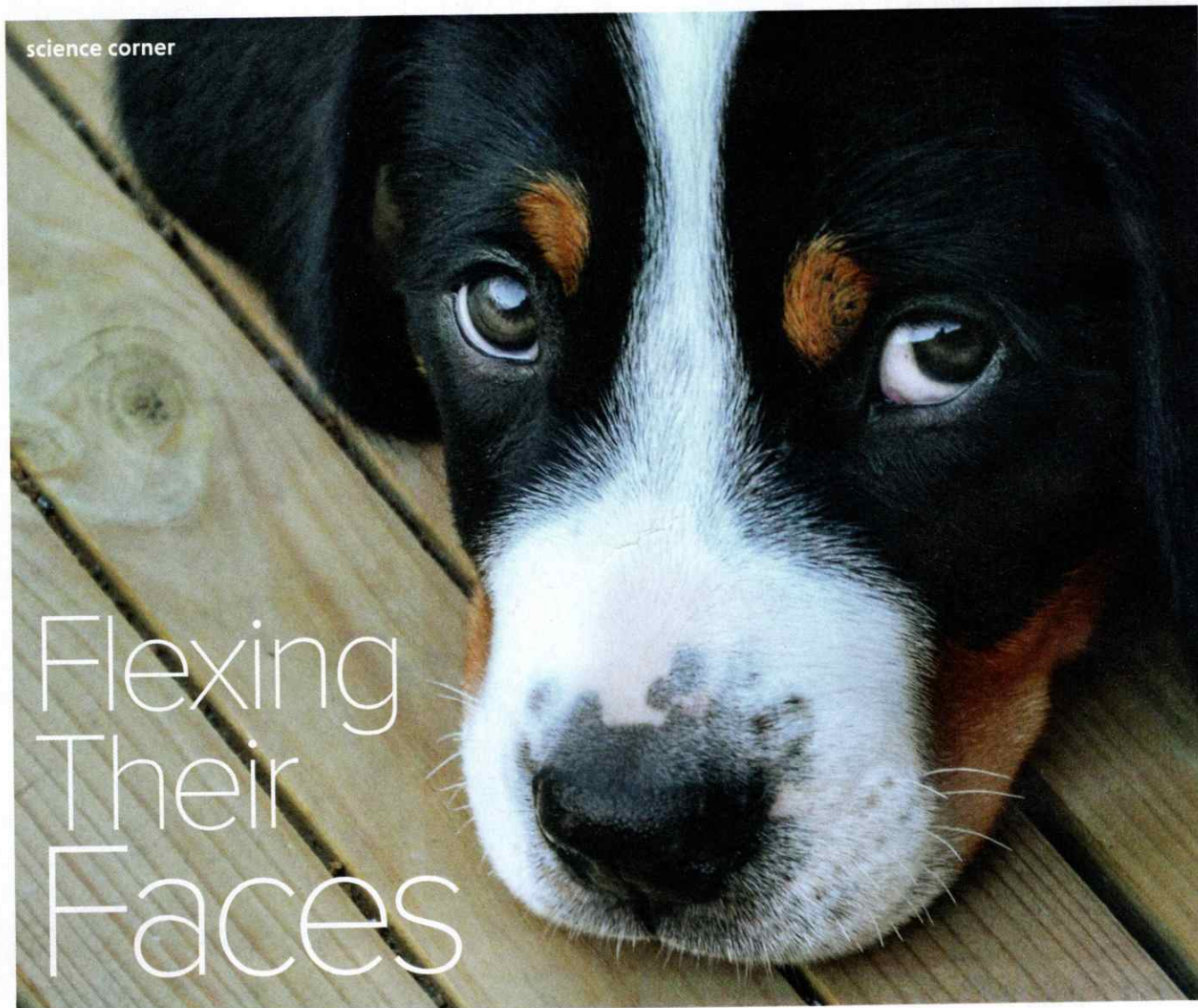


science corner



Flexing Their Faces

Scientists say puppy-dog eyes are powered by special muscles.

Dogs' ability to communicate through facial expressions stems from muscles they have developed over time—unlike wolves. That's according to researchers at Duquesne University, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who found dogs have muscles near their eyebrows called the *levator anguli oculi medialis* that enable them to raise their inner eyebrows for those irresistible puppy-dog eyes. Their

wild ancestors don't.

Dogs also have muscles around their mouths that allow them to bark and seemingly smile: the *orbicularis oris* and the *zygomaticus major*. As in humans, these muscles are mostly comprised of the fast-twitch fibers that enable us to instantly move our lips into a smile. Conversely, wolves have more slow-twitch fibers around their mouths that enable them to emit a long howl (as

opposed to a quick bark).

While dogs communicate with us through all sorts of body language—who doesn't love a wagging tail?—their expressive faces are just one more reason why the human-canine bond is so strong, and why they've cemented their role as "man's best friend."

To read the research, visit tinyurl.com/25tnuyyp and tinyurl.com/3juvj9fy.
—Jen Reeder

JWO/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO