

Dogs at workplace help bring down stress levels

WASHINGTON: Employers looking to ramp up productivity in these dog-eat-dog times might consider letting their staff bring Fido to the office, a scientific study published on Friday suggests.

Dogs at work can not only bring down stress levels among their owners, but they can also help make work more satisfying for other employees as well, according to the study in the latest issue of the *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*.

“The bottom line is that dogs in the workplace can make a positive difference,” said Prof Randolph Barker of Virginia Commonwealth University’s business school.

“They may in fact be a great buffer to the impact of stress on productivity, absenteeism and employee morale.”

Previous studies have underscored the benefits of therapy dogs in hospitals and nursing homes.

But Barker said his team’s investigation was among the very first to focus specifically on dogs in the workplace and their potential as “a low-cost wellness intervention readily available to many organisations”.

For a week, the researchers monitored day-shift staff at Replacements Ltd. For more than 15 years, Replacements has allowed its employees to bring their dogs to work.

Saliva samples verified that all participants started their workdays with low stress hormone levels.

In the ensuing hours, however, self-reported on-the-job stress levels fell among those with their dogs by their side, and grew for those who either left their animals at home or who had no pet at all. **AFP**