

Dear Dr. Doug, We just learned in anatomy class that people have an average of 206 bones in the adult human body. How many bones do dogs and cats have? Thanks,  
Luke

Dear Luke, Are you looking to be a doctor someday? Anyway, dogs and cats have many more bones than we have. To start with, to review what you learned in school, our pets also have 2 main categories of bones. The appendicular skeleton that is composed of legs, arms and feet bones, and the axial skeleton composed of head, neck, spine, and rib cage bones. On average, dogs have 319 bones. And yes, the tiniest little 4 lb Yorkie has the same 319 bones as the 150 lb Great Dane. Isn't that crazy!! And then there are our feline friends. They are in between, with an average of 244 bones. They can actually have a wider variation between individuals simply because some have longer tails than others, and, because some cats have extra toes. Those cats are called polydactyl cats. And one last interesting fact between male dogs and cats versus female dogs and cats. Males of both species have an extra bone in their penis called an os penis (much more prominent in dogs than cats...btw, people are lacking this bone). This can sometimes be a problem if a male pet develops urinary bladder stones because the stones can have a most difficult time passing through it and can cause a urinary obstruction, a very painful and life threatening situation. So there you have it Luke-- something to discuss in your next biology class. Have a great day.  
Dr. Doug