What the Kennel Club does for dog health

2017/2018

Useful links

The Academy
www.kcacademy.org.uk

Assured Breeder Scheme
www.assuredbreedersscheme.org.uk

Bio-Acquisition Research Collaboration (BARC)
www.kcbarc.org.uk

Breed Information Centre
www.breedinformationcentre.org.uk

Breed Watch
www.breedwatch.org.uk

BVA/KC Canine Health Schemes
www.bva.co.uk/Canine-Health-Schemes/

Canine Genetics and Epidemiology
http://cgejournal.biomedcentral.com/

Kennel Club Health Pages
www.thekennelclub.org.uk/doghealth

Kennel Club Charitable Trust
www.kccharitabletrust.org.uk

Mate Select
www.mateselect.org.uk

www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health
The Kennel Club is committed to ensuring that all dogs have the opportunity to lead healthy, happy lives, with responsible owners. By working collaboratively with the veterinary profession, the canine scientific world, dog welfare organisations and breed experts, the Kennel Club strives to work towards the protection of health and welfare of all dogs, both presently and in the future.

To view more on what the Kennel Club has done and is doing for dog health, please visit www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health

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Top topic of 2017: What is being done to improve education about canine health?

Educational films
The Kennel Club Academy offers a series of free educational canine health films, developed by experts in their field. In the last year, films on “brachycephalic breed health”, “canine bio-mechanics and movement” and “canine genetics” have been developed and used by around 10,000 subscribers.

Health symposiums
Each year the Kennel Club run a number of health events, including the Breed Watch Education Day and the Breed Health Symposium. Last year, the Breed Watch Education Day provided dog show judges, breeders and exhibitors with talks on common skin problems, Breed Watch procedure updates and judging for eye health. The Breed Health Symposium raised awareness of current issues in canine health and research, including talks on epilepsy, genetics, breed health and conservation, and how to find and interpret good quality dog health information.

Awareness week
In 2017, Canine Health Week focused on the most common health issues affecting dogs in Britain, including ear canal disease, dental disease, anal sac impaction, overgrown nails and arthritis. The awareness week used social media to highlight these common conditions and the steps that owners can take to try to prevent them.

Breed Watch Illustrated Guide
This new booklet is designed to help dog show judges identify Breed Watch points of concern, but also provides anyone interested in the health and welfare of show dogs with a comprehensive illustrated guide for category two and three breeds with points of concern.

Raising awareness of brachycephalic breed issues
Last year the Kennel Club set out to improve the information available on health issues experienced by flat-faced (brachycephalic) dogs, including updating the Breed Information Centre, producing a leaflet on brachycephalic health issues for Kennel Club events, publishing detailed web articles on specific brachycephalic health concerns and producing a new film on brachycephalic breathing problems. The Brachycephalic Working Group also issued an open letter to UK companies urging them to stop using brachycephalic dog breeds in advertising and marketing campaigns.
Breeding resources and health schemes

The Assured Breeder Scheme

The Assured Breeder Scheme promotes good breeding practices and ensures its members are dedicated to canine health. Currently, the scheme has around 4,500 members, who, in 2017, produced over 18,500 puppies.

The Estimated Breeding Values resource, used by breeders to assess the degree to which an animal may have inherited, or pass on, genes associated with hip or elbow dysplasia, received approximately 19,000 hits in 2017.

The BVA/KC Canine Health Schemes help breeders to assess which dogs to use for breeding, with the aim of reducing the incidence of health issues in future generations. In 2017, the schemes evaluated 8,700 dogs under the Hip Dysplasia Scheme, 5,000 dogs under the Elbow Dysplasia Scheme, 11,700 dogs under the Eye Scheme and 20 dogs under the Chondrodysplasia Peronaeal Dysplasia scheme.

Owners and veterinarians can report dogs that have had Caesarean section and conformation altering surgery to the Kennel Club. This reporting system enables the recording of information regarding breeding lines, assists dog show judges to be sure they are not called to assess dogs with hereditary defects which have been so well corrected by surgical intervention that they cannot be detected, and also to deter breeders from breeding animals displaying evidence of hereditary problems. In 2017, the Kennel Club received approximately 4,100 reports of caesarean sections and 530 reports of conformation operations.

The Inbreeding Co-efficient Calculator, which, among other things, can be used to run the scenario of how inbred potential puppies would be from a hypothetical mating, received approximately 400,000 hits in 2017.

The Health Tests Results Finder, a resource to allow breeders and potential puppy buyers to search for health test and screening scheme results for any dog registered on the Kennel Club’s breed register, received approximately 350,000 online hits in 2017.

The Breed Information Centre, which recommends breed specific health tests and includes everything you need to know about a breed, including its exercise and grooming needs, received approximately 3,800,000 hits in 2017.

The Kennel Club provide extensive and detailed online guidance on important factors to consider when breeding dogs and how to use results from health tests and screening schemes appropriately.

Breed Health and Conservation Plans

The Breed Health and Conservation Plans (BHCP) is an ongoing project that uses health data and published scientific research to identify each breed’s health concerns and help breeders make informed and balanced breeding decisions. At the end of the first stage of a breed’s BHCP, a document is produced that summarises all of the projects findings. A meeting is then arranged with breed representatives to discuss the evidence base and agree priorities, an action plan and a review date to evaluate progress.

Almost all of the first 17 breeds to participate in the BHCP project now have a complete evidence based document. Priorities and action plans have been agreed with several breeds, meetings have been arranged with several more, and the remaining breeds are expected to complete the process in the next few months. 30 breeds have been identified and notified that they are in the second round for BHCPs, and work is underway on their evidence bases, with meetings arranged for later in 2018.

Data will be collected on:

- Known inherited diseases
- Suspected and emerging inherited diseases
- Population structure and inbreeding risks
- Visible health concerns (conformation)

Resources that will be used:

- Scientific literature
- Breed club health survey data
- Data from Breed club health initiatives
- Kennel Club’s 2014 Pedigree Breed Health Survey Data
- Population analysis of Kennel Club data
- Data from Official Kennel Club DNA testing schemes
- Data from BVA/KC Screening Schemes

Collaborators:

- Breed clubs
- Breed Health Co-ordinators
- Veterinary community
- Research community

The data and evidence from the BHCPs will help the Kennel Club and its collaborators identify where additional research is needed, and whether new breeding strategies with a particular focus on health are required.

Each breed’s BHCP report will be the foundation by which canine health can be improved.
Dog health partners and collaborators

**Breed Health Co-ordinators**

Breed Health Co-ordinators (BHCs) are individuals working on behalf of breed clubs and councils who are advocates for the health and welfare of their chosen breed. The BHC acts as a spokesperson on matters of health, collaborating with the Kennel Club on any health concerns the breed may have. The Kennel Club provide BHCs with advice and resources to help promote and improve the health of their breed where necessary.

**Breed Health Co-ordinator Mentor Scheme**

The Breed Health Co-ordinator Mentor Scheme helps Breed Health Co-ordinators (BHCs) who require assistance, especially those who have recently become BHCs. The mentor scheme currently involves a small number of highly experienced and passionate Breed Health Co-ordinators and health representatives who have volunteered to help BHCs to help their breed.

**Brachycephalic Working Group**

In 2017, the Brachycephalic Breeds Working Group (made up of the Kennel Club, breed club representatives, the BVA, BSAVA, Dogs Trust, the RVC, RSPCA, and the Cambridge University Department of Veterinary Medicine) released a framework for an approach to improving brachycephalic dog health and welfare and also issued an open letter to UK companies urging them to stop using brachycephalic dog breeds in advertising and marketing campaigns.

**Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Heart Working Party**

In 2017 a working party, consisting of the Kennel Club, representatives of the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel breed clubs and the Veterinary Cardiology Society (VCS), was set up to review and improve the heart screening of the breed within the UK, to enable more robust collection and publication of data. It is hoped that a new heart scheme will be launching mid-2018.

**Large and Giant Breed Working Party**

The Large and Giant Breeds Working Group was set up in early 2017, comprising of the Kennel Club and representatives from 15 breeds. The project brings the expertise of different stakeholders together to help tackle health concerns shared by these breeds.

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**Health & welfare of show dogs**

**FIT FOR FUNCTION BREED WATCH**

The Kennel Club, in conjunction with the British Veterinary Association (BVA), run four clinical screening schemes. These schemes are designed to help breeders assess which dogs to use for breeding, with the aim of reducing the incidence of health issues in future generations.

The **Breed Watch** web page, a resource to assist judges in monitoring and addressing visible health concerns in dogs exhibiting at shows, was visited over 63,000 times in 2017.

The **Breed Watch Illustrated Guide**, released in early 2018, highlights and explains the correlation between exaggerated conformation and how these features can lead to canine welfare implications. This booklet is specifically designed to help dog show judges identify Breed Watch points of concern and provides a comprehensive illustrated guide for category two and three breeds with points of concern.

In 2017, due to the hard work of the Breed Clubs and breed community the Shar Pei and Chow Chow were reclassified from a Breed Watch category three breed to a category two breed.

In addition to judges health monitoring, during 2017, a total of 265 Category 3 breeds were vet checked at Group & General Championship Shows for Best of Breed and Champion title awards. Of these checks, 260 were passes and 5 were fails.

All judges with appointments for category two and three breeds are required to complete a mandatory health monitoring form to enable the Kennel Club to collect data on the visual health of the dogs they have judged. In 2017, 1,062 mandatory judges’ health monitoring forms were completed across 44 breeds.

The annual **Breed Watch Education Day** provides an opportunity to help dog show judges develop their knowledge and further understand how to identify any visible health and welfare concerns. The 2017 seminar comprised of lectures on common skin problems, Breed Watch procedure updates and judging for eye health, with all tickets for the event sold with 50 judges attending.

The **Breath Watch Illustrated Guide**, released in early 2018, highlights and explains the correlation between exaggerated conformation and how these features can lead to canine welfare implications. This booklet is specifically designed to help dog show judges identify Breed Watch points of concern and provides a comprehensive illustrated guide for category two and three breeds with points of concern.

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Events and education

The 2017 Breed Health Symposium included talks on canine epilepsy, genetics, breed health and conservation, and how to find and interpret good quality dog health information. The event aimed to improve people’s awareness of current issues in canine health, offer updates on the latest research, provide an opportunity to discuss future plans and answer questions both group and individual questions. In previous years the attendance of this annual event has been restricted to breed health co-ordinators. However, due to increased interest, the 2017 symposium was opened up to everyone. The 2017 Breed Health Symposium was attended by around 200 attendees.

During the 2017 Crufts, around 250 veterinary students attended free lectures on problems associated with brachycephalic breeds and the latest research in understanding Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS). Around 800 veterinary students were provided with free Crufts tickets to help them learn more about pedigree dogs and dog health.

The 2017 Breed Health Symposium was attended by around 200 attendees.

Films released in 2017/2018 include:

**Brachycephalic Breeds Health**

The film focuses on Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome and what clinical signs may be presented in affected dogs, focusing on the top three brachycephalic breeds: Pugs, Bulldogs and French Bulldogs.

**Canine Bio-mechanics and movement**

This film discuss canine biomechanics and identifying lameness, through the importance of soundness in movement, visual indicators when assessing a dog and current and future advancements in canine biomechanics research.

**Canine Genetics**

This film provides an overview of canine genetics to help viewers gain a basic understanding of how mutations in dogs occur, how this could lead to a change in visual and genetic characteristics and why a responsible breeder will use these tests to advance their breeding.
Supporting involvement in health research

The Kennel Club regularly assists veterinary researchers in promoting current studies by emailing Breed Health Co-ordinators, veterinary contacts and owners of relevant breeds, as well as promoting the studies on social media. Over the last three years, the Kennel Club has promoted 30 separate health research projects via the BARC project (Bio-Acquisition Research Collaboration).

The Kennel Club utilises its registration database to contact registered owners of particular breeds, asking for them to participate in health surveys, studies and health clinics. In 2017, the Kennel Club emailed around 140,000 dog owners and breeders to promote 40 different independent health surveys, research projects and health clinics.

The International Canine Health Awards, an initiative administered by the Kennel Club Charitable Trust and underwritten by a major gift from Vernon and Shirley Hill, founders of Metro Bank, recognise innovative researchers and veterinary scientists whose work has had a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of dogs. In 2017, the International Canine Health Awards donated £65,000 to scientific research to help improve the health of dogs.

The Kennel Club Charitable Trust (KCCT) donated over £450,000 to aid with scientific research. The Kennel Club Health Team currently work closely with the following research groups:

- Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS) at Cambridge University. The aim of this study is to improve the health of dogs which are already affected by BOAS and to create breeding tools which will help breeders make informed choices and ultimately breed healthier puppies.
- German Shepherd gait and movement at the University of Surrey. A research project to investigate how German Shepherd Dogs stand and move, advancing our understanding and potentially providing information that could be of benefit to all dogs.
- The Veterinary Companion Animal Surveillance System (VetCompass), a not-for-profit research project at The Royal Veterinary College (RVC), investigates the range and frequency of companion animal health problems by using data stored in individual computerised veterinary practice management systems.

In 2017, the Canine Genetics and Epidemiology journal, the first journal dedicated to the health of all canid species, published 16 articles that were accessed over 36,000 times. Support from the Kennel Club for the journal is primarily from the Kennel Club Educational Trust, to provide bursaries to make submitting to the journal as easy as possible.
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