What the Kennel Club does for dog health

2018/2019

www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health
Breeding resources and health schemes

The **Assured Breeder Scheme** promotes good breeding practices and ensures its members are dedicated to canine health. Currently the scheme has around 5,000 members, who, in 2018, produced over 18,500 puppies.

The **Estimated Breeding Values** resource, used by breeders to assess the degree to which a dog may have inherited, or pass on, genes associated with hip or elbow dysplasia, received approximately 19,000 hits in 2018.

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 2018, the schemes evaluated 8,400 dogs under the Hip Dysplasia Scheme, 5,300 dogs under the Elbow Dysplasia Scheme, 12,500 dogs under the Eye Scheme and 21 dogs under the Chiari Malformation/Syringomyelia scheme.

Owners can report dogs that have had **Caesarean section and conformation altering surgery** to the Kennel Club. This 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 that have been corrected by surgery, and also to deter breeders from breeding animals with possible hereditary problems. In 2018, the Kennel Club received approximately 7,400 reports of caesarean sections and 570 reports of conformation operations.

The **Mate Select** website, a resource that allows breeders, puppy buyers and owners to look up the health information that is available for each Kennel Club breed registered dog, was visited over 1,800,000 times in 2018.

The **Inbreeding Co-efficient Calculators**, 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 2018.

The **KCI 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 2018.

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 2,800,000 hits in 2018.
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.

In February 2019, the Kennel Club and University of Cambridge launched the Respiratory Function Grading Scheme. This health screening scheme assesses Bulldogs, French Bulldogs and Pugs for a breathing problem known as BOAS (Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome). BOAS is a progressive disorder that can affect dogs with a flat face and can impair a dog’s ability to exercise, play, eat and sleep. The scheme advises owners if their dog is affected by BOAS and gives guidance to breeders on how to lower the risk of producing affected puppies.

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 to ensure that breeders, breed clubs, veterinary researchers and the Kennel Club are all working together to improve dog health. 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. Currently, Breed Health and Conservation Plans have been created for 42 breeds.

Data will be collected on:
- Known inherited diseases
- Suspected and emerging inherited disease
- 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

Initially 17 Key priority breeds will be provided with a Breed Health and Conservation Plan (BHCP).
Eventually all Kennel Club recognised breeds will have a BHCP.

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

This new resource uses evidence-based research to identify, understand and prioritise health issues faced by each breed.
Each breed’s BHCP report will be the foundation by which canine health can be improved.

Identify where additional research is required and where further funding is needed
Help create breeding strategies with a particular focus on health
Determine where new breeding resources are required
Help the Kennel Club and its collaborators make evidence-based decisions on the best ways to improve canine health
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.

Breathcephalic Working Group

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). The group aims to improve the health and welfare of flat-faced dogs as well as also reducing the current trend towards rising demand for these dogs.

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.

Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Heart Working Party

A working party, consisting of the Kennel Club, representatives of the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel breed clubs and the Veterinary Cardiology Society (VCS), has been 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 early 2019.

Large and Giant Breed Working Party

The Large and Giant Breeds Working Group comprises 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.
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 54,000 times in 2018.

The Breed Watch Illustrated Guide 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 addition to judges health monitoring, during 2018, 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 2018, 1,100 mandatory judges’ health monitoring forms were completed across 46 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 2018 Breed Health Symposium included talks on canine cancer and common skin problems. 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.

The 2018 Breed Health Symposium was attended by around 150 attendees.

During the 2018 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).

The Kennel Club’s online Dog Health Information pages, an area designed to cover health issues and considerations that impact on dog breeding ownership and puppy buying were accessed over 1,000,000 times in 2018.

The Kennel Scope a free quarterly canine health e-newsletter, currently has over 3,800 subscribers.

The Academy offers a series of free films for breeders that cover topics on breeding considerations, such as understanding inheritance, health testing and how to be a responsible and informed breeder to produce healthy puppies, with additional films on whelping and rearing, and canine pregnancy. All films have been developed by experts in their fields and offer users an insight into their knowledge and experience. In 2018 a film on Brachycephalic Breeds Health was released, focusing on breathing problems in flat-faced dogs such as Pugs, Bulldogs and French bulldogs and what clinical signs may be presented in affected dogs.

Every film comes with useful learning resources and suggested further reading. The Academy now has over 10,000 subscribers.
Supporting involvement in health research

In 2018, the Kennel Club Charitable Trust (KCCT) donated over £430,000 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.

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. In 2018, the Kennel Club emailed around 330,000 dog owners and breeders to promote 66 different independent health surveys, research projects and health clinics.

The Kennel Club Genetics Centre at the Animal Health Trust contributes significantly towards research into inherited canine disease, testing around 10,000 dogs each year and creating new diagnostic DNA tests for various inherited diseases.

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 £66,000 to scientific research to help improve the health of dogs.

In 2018, the Canine Genetics and Epidemiology journal, the first journal dedicated to the health of all canid species, published 12 articles that were accessed over 57,500 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.

The Kennel Club Cancer Centre at the Animal Health Trust helps pets receive the latest treatment and invest in ways in which to better understand the disease.
Useful links

The Academy
www.kcacademy.org.uk

Assured Breeder Scheme
www.assuredbreederscheme.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