

Report from the Kennel Club/  
British Small Animal Veterinary Association  
Scientific Committee

Summary results of the  
Purebred Dog Health Survey  
for the St Bernard breed

Warning: The results of this survey and particularly the breed-specific analyses should be interpreted with caution. The overall response rate was only 24% with breed-specific response rates from 4.5% to 64.7%.

## The St Bernard breed

A total of 130 forms were sent out and 24 were returned, representing 87 live dogs. This breed had an 18.5% response rate (24/130) and it represented 0.17% of all returns (24/13,741).

### Mortality data

A total of 53 deaths were reported and this represents 0.33% of all deaths reported in the survey (53/15,881). The median age at death for the St Bernard breed was 7 years (min = 6 months, max = 12 years and 9 months) and this was lower than the overall median of 11 years and 3 months (Figure 1). Table 1 shows the causes of death for the St Bernard breed. Age at death is presented for the most common causes of death (Figure 2).

Table 1. Causes of death by organ system/category for the St Bernard breed.

Cause of death	N	%	Most common specific causes in descending order
1 Cardiac	15	28.3	Cardiomyopathy unspecified; heart failure
2 Cancer	9	17.0	Type unspecified (bone)
3 Gastrointestinal	8	15.1	Gastric dilatation/volvulus (GDV)
4 Old age	4	7.5	Old age & age combinations
5 Cerebral vascular	2	3.8	Stroke or cerebral vascular accident
6 Musculoskeletal	2	3.8	Arthritis; hip dysplasia
7 Perioperative	2	3.8	
8 Urologic	2	3.8	Kidney failure
9 Behaviour	1	1.9	Aggression
10 Combinations	1	1.9	
11 Endocrine	1	1.9	Addisons disease
12 Hepatic	1	1.9	Liver failure
13 Hyperthermia	1	1.9	
14 Neurologic	1	1.9	Seizures
15 Other	1	1.9	Uncodeable
16 Reproductive	1	1.9	Pyometra
17 Septicaemia	1	1.9	
Total	53	100.0	

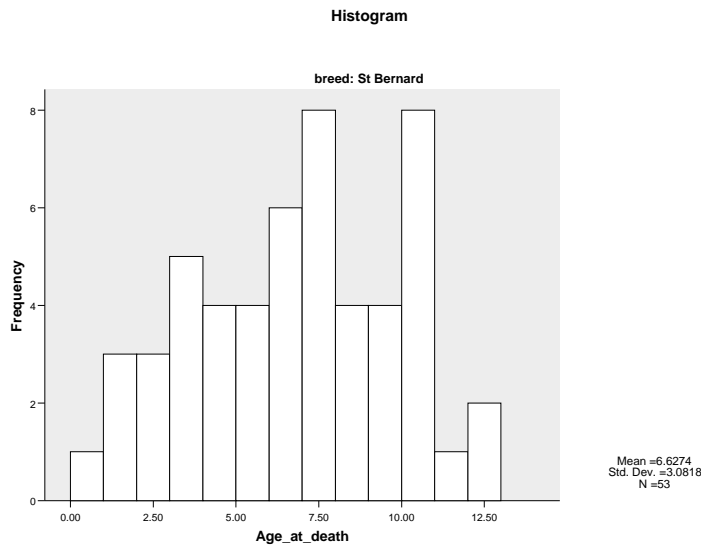


Figure 1. Histogram showing the frequency (as number of dogs) of age at death (in years) for the 53 St Bernard deaths with age at death reported.

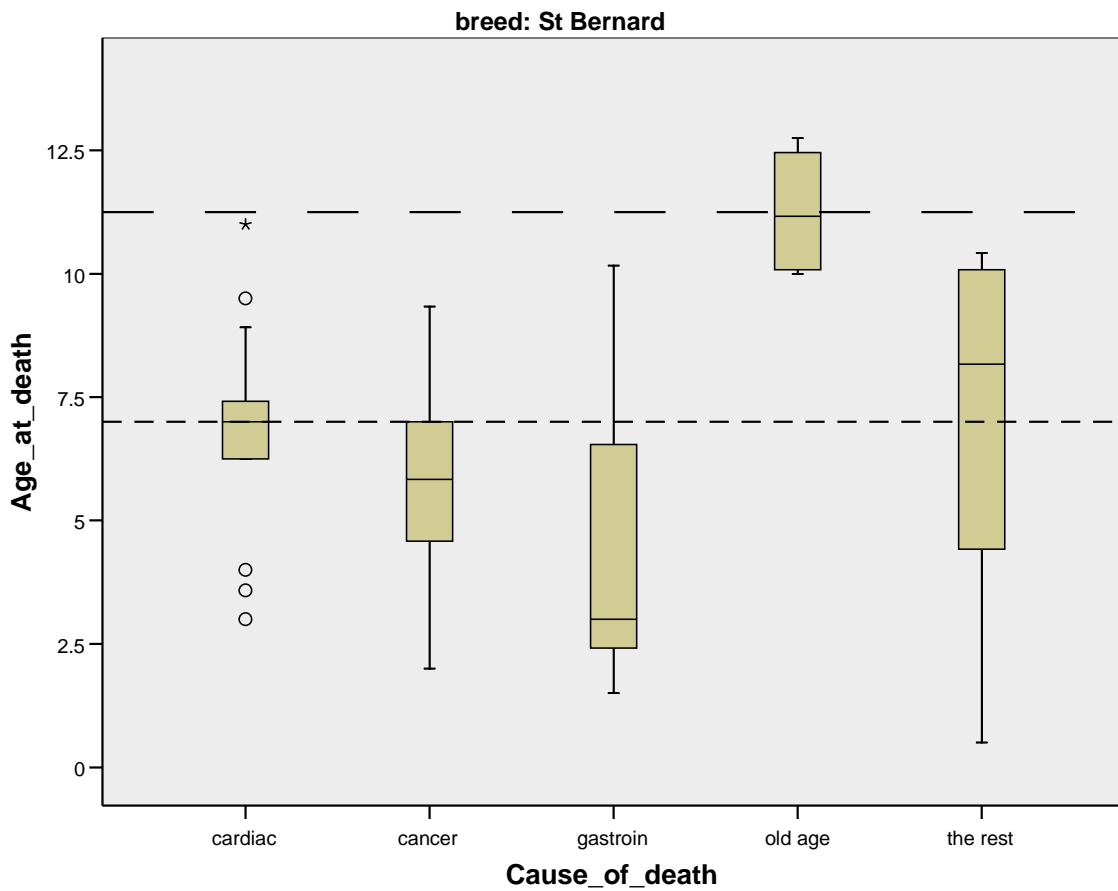


Figure 2. Box and whisker plot of age at death in years for the most common causes of death in the St Bernard breed (N=53). The dashed line (---) is the overall median age at death for all dogs in the survey and the dotted line (----) is the overall median age of death for the St Bernard breed. The solid line within each grey box represents the median age at death from the condition.

**Morbidity data**

The median current age of the 87 live dogs with a reported age was 3 years and 9 months (min=5 months, max=11 years, Figure 3). Health information was reported for 87 live dogs of which 43 (49%) were healthy and 44 (51%) had at least one reported health condition, resulting in a total of 77 reported conditions with a median of 1 condition/dog (min=1, max=6).

The median current age of all healthy dogs with a reported age (N=43) was 3 years and 5 months (min=5 months, max=11 years). The distribution of gender and neuter status is shown in Table 2.

The median current age of all dogs with one or more disease conditions and a reported age (N=44) was 4 years and 3 months (min=1 year and 3 months, max=8 years and 9 months). The median age at diagnosis for all disease occurrences with a reported age at diagnosis (N=77) was 2 years and 3 months (min= 3 months, max= 7 years, Figure 4). Table 3 shows the disease conditions for the St Bernard breed. Age at diagnosis is presented for the most common disease conditions (Figure 5).

Table 2. Distribution of gender and neuter status for 87 St Bernards with reported gender and neuter status.

Gender	Neuter status		Totals
	Intact	Neutered	
Female	44	7	51 (59%)
Male	33	3	36 (41%)
Totals	77 (89%)	10 (11%)	87 (100%)

There was no association between gender and neuter status (P=0.4374).

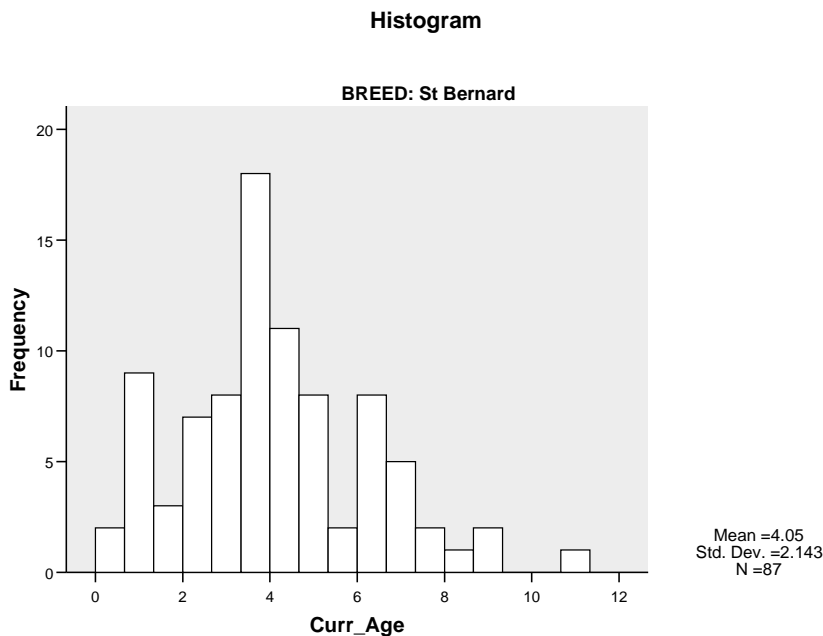


Figure 3. Histogram showing frequency of current age in years for the 87 live St Bernards with age reported.

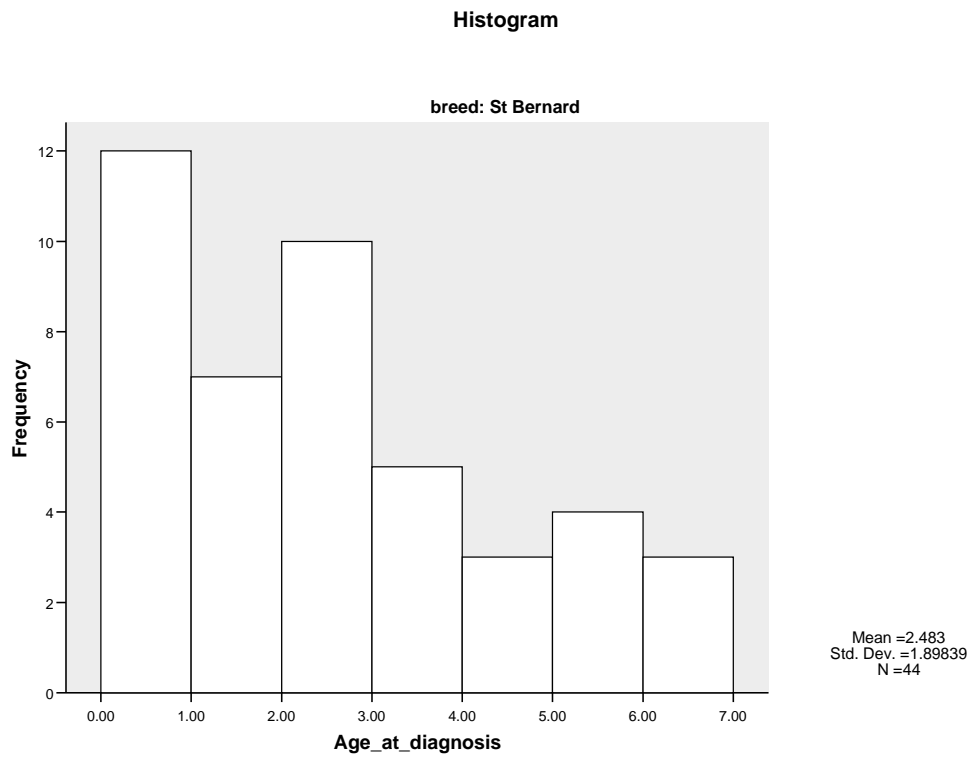


Figure 4. Histogram showing frequency of age at diagnosis for the 44 St Bernard breed with one or more disease conditions, using the youngest age at which a disease condition was first reported for those dogs with more than one disease condition or episode.

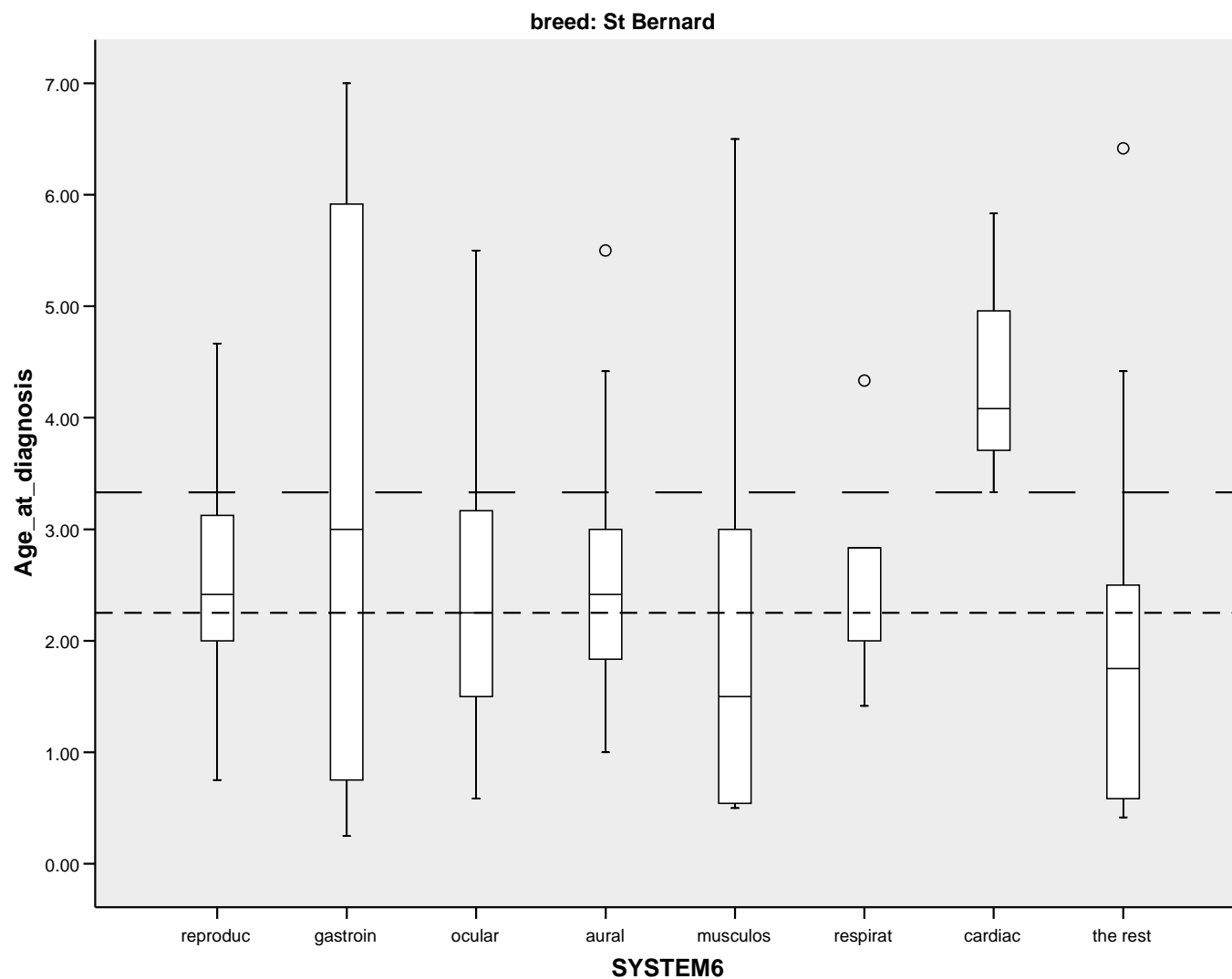


Figure 5. Box and whisker plot of age at diagnosis in years for the most common disease conditions in descending order for the St Bernard breed (N=44 dogs with 77 conditions with age reported). The dashed line (---) is the overall median age at diagnosis for all dogs in the survey and the dotted line (----) is the overall median age at diagnosis for the St Bernard breed. The solid line within each grey box represents the median age at diagnosis from the condition.

Table 3. Disease conditions by organ system/category for the St Bernard breed.

Disease condition	All conditions		Most common specific conditions in descending order
	N	%	
1 Reproductive	12	15.6	Dystochia (uterine inertia>physical blockage); infertility; pyometra; spontaneous abortion
2 Gastrointestinal	11	14.3	Gastric dilatation/volvulus (GDV); diarrhoea; weight loss; vomiting; infection (unspecified)
3 Ocular	11	14.3	Entropion; red eye; corneal ulcer; cherry eye; glaucoma
4 Aural	10	13.0	Otitis externa; aural haematoma; excessive ear wax
5 Musculoskeletal	7	9.1	Arthritis (hips=shoulders=unspec); CLR; CHD; OCD (shoulder); lameness (unspecified)
6 Respiratory	6	7.8	Kennel cough; rhinitis
7 Dental	4	5.2	Retained puppy teeth
8 Cardiac	3	3.9	Arrhythmia; dilated cardiomyopathy
9 Neurologic	3	3.9	Seizures; chronic degenerative radiculomyelopathy (CDRM)
10 Urologic	3	3.9	Cystitis
11 Immune mediated	2	2.6	Gluten-sensitive enteropathy; flea allergy
12 Unknown	2	2.6	Undiagnosed illness
13 Behaviour	1	1.3	Unspecified
14 Benign neoplasia	1	1.3	Unspecified (leg)
15 Dermatologic	1	1.3	Pyotraumatic dermatitis
Total	77	100.0	