



## UK Companion Animal Health Surveillance

For so many reasons, 2020 has been an unforgettable year. The Pandemic has changed how we live and work, and even how we think. The live daily 5pm Coronavirus updates have brought epidemiology into the living rooms and kitchens of the nation, and turned the UK population into a nation of epidemiologists. We are now all sadly so comfortable with terms such as *lockdown* and *social distancing*, and *herd immunity*. We all now understand the importance of understanding *comorbidity* such as age and gender effects. And we have learned the importance of understanding comorbidity with conditions such as obesity and respiratory disease in terms of predisposing to worsened outcomes from a new infection such as Covid19.

The year 2020 was represented the 10<sup>th</sup>





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is a third year PhD student and is investigating Cushing's syndrome in dogs, funded









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There has been a seismic shift in the demand for puppies since the Covid19 pandemic hit the UK. Puppy prices have soared, and we now purchase puppies in very different ways. These, and other changes, are likely to lead to substantial welfare impacts for this current 'pandemic generation' of puppies. In an effort to understand the true depth of changes to UK puppy-buying habits, VetCompass is collaborating with the Pandemic Puppies project at the RVC to investigate this phenomenon by carrying out one of the biggest owner surveys ever conducted in the UK.

The study is funded by the Animal Welfare Foundation of BVA and is led by Rowena Packer along with Dan O'Neill, Claire Brand, Zoe Belshaw and Camilla Pegram. The study involves an online questionnaire of owners of any puppies bought during 2019 or 2020 to compare the 'how's and whys' of pandemic puppy purchase versus 'typical' dog purchasing in the UK. The Pandemic team are keen to recruit owners of any breed or crossbreed to allow comparison between groups.

The survey is available right now and will remain open until 31 December 2020. It takes just 20 minutes to complete, although there is an option to answer a shorter 15 minute version. The information collected will help us provide support to owners



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Research alone doesn't change animal welfare; a limiting factor is often effective dissemination strategies that share this information with relevant stakeholders and opinion-formers. VetCompass aims to summarise and present the key findings from research papers in digestible and eye-catching presentations and share these widely.

VetCompass has reframed the typical academic model whereby scientific research is mainly shared with just other scientific colleagues. Instead, by presenting cutting-edge science via infographics and by disseminating these widely, VetCompass is empowering owners, breeders and veterinary professionals to apply the latest evidence to improve their animal's health, and consequently human health.

Dissemination strategies used to date for these findings and recommendations have included:

1. General and veterinary-specific press releases
2. Radio and other media interviews
3. Social media posts including Twitter and Facebook
4. Sharing by organisational partners such as the Kennel Club or British Veterinary Association
5. Sharing by veterinary clinical practices

Each VetCompass infographic summarises the key study findings which are presented using images, graphical data and links to the full study, along with action points or take home messages for owners and breeders. The format over successive infographs is standardised, with the aim to become instantly recognisable as VetCompass research and easily read and interpreted. The infographics can be directly accessed by the general public, or can be used as a resource by veterinarians. For prospective pet owners considering a particular breed, or when a vet has just diagnosed an animal with a specific condition, we are now entering an era where veterinarians can direct owners to the relevant VetCompass infographic. <https://www.vetcompass.org/>







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1. [Demography and commonly recorded clinical conditions of Chihuahuas under primary veterinary care in the UK in 2016](#)
2. [Staffordshire bull terriers in the UK: their disorder predispositions and protections](#)
3. [Unravelling the health status of brachycephalic dogs in the UK using multivariable analysis](#)
4. [Incidence and risk factors for heat-related illness \(heatstroke\) in UK dogs under primary veterinary care in 2016](#)
5. [Dogs Don't Die Just in Hot Cars - Exertional Heat-Related Illness \(Heatstroke\) Is a Greater Threat to UK Dogs](#)
6. Development and internal validation of a p