

BACKGROUND

- The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic led to a worldwide increase in puppy buying, the so-called 'Pandemic Puppy' phenomenon.
- The RVC launched the Pandemic Puppies study in November 2020 to characterise and understand this phenomenon in the UK.
- Motivations and behaviours of UK owners who purchased puppies during the 2020 pandemic were compared to those of owners who purchased puppies during 2019.



KEY FINDINGS

Number of puppies in study

5,517

1 in 10 Pandemic Puppy owners had not considered buying a dog before the pandemic

2 in 5 Pandemic Puppy owners felt the pandemic influenced their decision to buy a puppy

Average cost of a puppy

2019 - £995
 2020 - £1550
 = 55.8% increase



Compared to 2019 owners, Pandemic Puppy owners were more likely to:

- Be first time dog owners.
- Have children in their household.
- Pay a deposit before seeing their puppy.
- Meet their puppy without their littermates.

Compared to 2019 owners, Pandemic Puppy owners were less likely to:

- Look for a breeder who performed health tests.
- View their puppy in person before buying them.
- See the environment their puppy was raised in.

PUPPY BUYING RECOMMENDATIONS



Visit your puppy in their home environment before you buy them



Make sure you see your puppy with their mother and their littermates



Don't feel pressured into buying any puppy and don't pay a deposit before visiting your puppy in person



Make sure your puppy is over 8 weeks old when you bring them home



Ask for a copy of the health records of your puppy's parents

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PANDEMIC PUPPY OWNERS



Many standard recommended puppy buying practices could not be followed in a COVID-19 safe manner, leading to higher risks of puppies coming from poor welfare sources. Contact your veterinarian if you have any concerns about your dog's health.



As restrictions ease in the UK, owners of Pandemic Puppies can take steps to support their dogs with changes to their routine. **Dogs Trust** have a useful resource, covering topics such as introducing your dog to other dogs.



If you have more serious concerns about your dog's behaviour, contact your veterinarian to discuss referral to an ABTC accredited animal or veterinary behaviourist.

For more information visit <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass/research-projects-and-opportunities/projects/rvc-pandemic-puppies-survey>

CLICK TO READ FULL PAPER

Packer, R. M. A., Brand, C. L., Belshaw, Z., Pegram, C. L., Stevens, K. B. and O'Neill, D. G. (2021) Pandemic Puppies: Characterising motivations and behaviours of UK owners who purchased puppies during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. *Animals*, 11, 2500.