



# DISORDERS OF SHIH TZU DOGS IN THE UK

The Shih Tzu is a small sized and popular dog breed in the UK. However, relatively little information is published on the common health issues in the breed although such information is critically important to assist owners to care for their dogs.

This study aimed to describe the demography, mortality and most common disorders of Shih Tzu dogs in the UK. The study analysed anonymised veterinary clinical records from the VetCompass Programme.

The study included 11,082 Shih Tzu dogs (comprising 3.29% of 336,865 study dogs)

On average, Shih Tzu dogs lived to 12.7 years

The average bodyweight of Shih Tzu dogs was 7.9kg (Male: 8.5kg vs Female: 7.3kg)

## Most commonly diagnosed disorders

The most commonly diagnosed disorders in Shih Tzu were **periodontal disease** (infection of the tissues that hold the teeth in place), **anal sac impaction** and **ear disorders**.

1. Periodontal disease inflammation around teeth (9.5%)

2. Anal sac impaction (7.4%)

3. Ear disorder (5.5%)

4. Otitis externa (inflamed ear canal) (4.7%)

5. Vomiting (4.4%)

6. Overgrown nails (4.3%)

7. Umbilical hernia (3.9%)

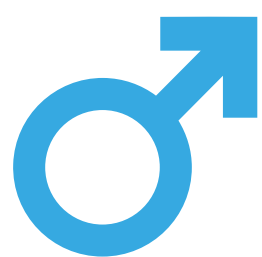
8. Post-operative complication (3.8%)

9. Obesity (3.5%)

10. Corneal ulceration (eye ulcer) (3.5%)



Female Shih Tzu had higher probability than males of umbilical hernia



Male Shih Tzu had higher probability than females of aggression, heart murmur, skin lesions and haircoat disorder

The most commonly reported causes of death were **intestinal disease (9.6%)**, **heart disease (9.6%)** and **poor quality of life (9.6%)**



The frequencies of anal sac impaction, umbilical hernia and eye problems were higher in Shih Tzu than previously identified in dogs overall\*, suggesting Shih Tzu dogs are predisposed for these disorders. This information can help vets, breeders and owners to prioritise management of these disorders

Periodontal (dental) disease was the most common condition affecting the breed, highlighting the importance of regular veterinary dental checks and as well as tooth brushing in Shih Tzu.



The overall longevity and disorder patterns in Shih Tzu were similar to dogs overall. This suggests that the Shih Tzu overall has quite robust health.

\*O'Neill et al. (2021) Prevalence of commonly diagnosed disorders in UK dogs under primary veterinary care: results and applications. BMC Veterinary Research

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Dale et al. (2023) "Demography, common disorders and mortality of Shih Tzu dogs under primary veterinary care in the UK" Canine Medicine and Genetics

RVC VetCompass <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass> carries out welfare research based on anonymised clinical information shared from over 30% of UK veterinary practices. We are very grateful to the owners and veterinary professionals who contribute to VetCompass research.