

DOODLE BEHAVIOUR UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

Comparing undesirable behaviours between 'designer' Poodle-cross dogs and their purebred progenitor breeds



Poodle-cross (Doodle) breeds are the most common of the new wave of designer crossbreeds. This rise is fuelled by a common perception that these dogs are more likely to display favourable behavioural traits, such as trainability and suitability for families with children. However, there is limited scientific evidence to support such beliefs.

This study aimed to fill this gap by comparing Canine Behavioural Assessment and Research Questionnaire (C-BARQ) scores between the three most common Doodle breeds (Cockapoo, Labradoodle and Cavapoo) in the UK and their relevant purebred parent breeds (Cocker Spaniel, Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Labrador Retriever and Poodle).

Sample



An online survey was used to explore ownership experiences of poodle-crosses and their purebred parent breeds.

The survey was promoted through social media and veterinary organisations

9,402

Valid responses were analysed

** Poodle types: Miniature (n=352), Standard (n=315) and Toy (n=260)

Results:

54.2%

of undesirable behaviour comparisons differed between the three Doodle breeds and their parent breeds



Of the comparisons that differed, **designer-crossbreeds** exhibited...

- **More undesirable behaviours** in **82%** of behaviour scales
- **Less undesirable behaviours** in **18%** of behaviour scales

Compared to their non-Poodle parents, **Cockapoos, Labradoodles and Cavapoos** exhibited more of these undesirable behaviours:



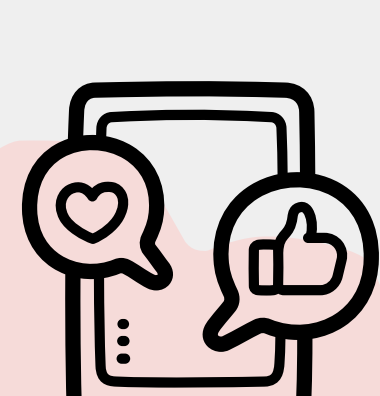
Levels of undesirable behaviour varied widely between the three Doodle breeds.

Cockapoos were reported to display the most undesirable behaviours out of the three Poodle-crosses studied.

This included aggressive behaviours such as owner-directed aggression and aggression towards dogs they lived with.



With the exception of better trainability in Cavapoos compared to their parent breeds, the **Labradoodle** was the only designer-crossbreed to **show less undesirable behaviour** than its purebred parents in >1 behaviour comparison.



Doodle owners were more likely to **use non-professional training resources** such as **social media** and **advice from family and friends** than **purebred parent breeds**. These sources have the potential to be highly variable in quality and **may be misleading**.

Conclusions

These findings suggest notable behavioural differences between Doodle designer-crossbreeds versus their parent breeds, with **Cockapoos** in particular scoring worse.

Dog owners are encouraged to seek professional advice regarding their dog's behaviour, from qualified behaviourists, trainers and veterinary professionals.

These results emphasise that owners should thoroughly research the characteristics of any breed during pre-purchase research. Prospective owners should meet the parents of any prospective puppy to appraise their behaviour prior to acquisition.

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Bryson GT, O'Neill DG, Belshaw Z, Brand CL, Packer RMA (2026) Comparing undesirable behaviours between 'designer' Poodle-cross dogs and their purebred progenitor breeds. PLoS One 21(2): e0342847

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.