

BACKGROUND

- A new study, led by the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), has revealed huge demand for 'designer crossbreed' dogs (e.g., Cavapoo, Labradoodle) in the UK between 2019 and 2020.
- Increased demand may lead to poorer breeding and buyers may unintentionally support puppy farming and illegal importation of puppies.
- The reasons for this boom in popularity were not previously clear; this study sought to explore why and how people purchased designer crossbreed puppies in the UK.

'Designer crossbreeds': purpose-bred crosses originating from two (or sometimes more) purebred parent breeds

Designer crossbreed ownership in:

2019

Fewer than 1 in 5 puppies purchased



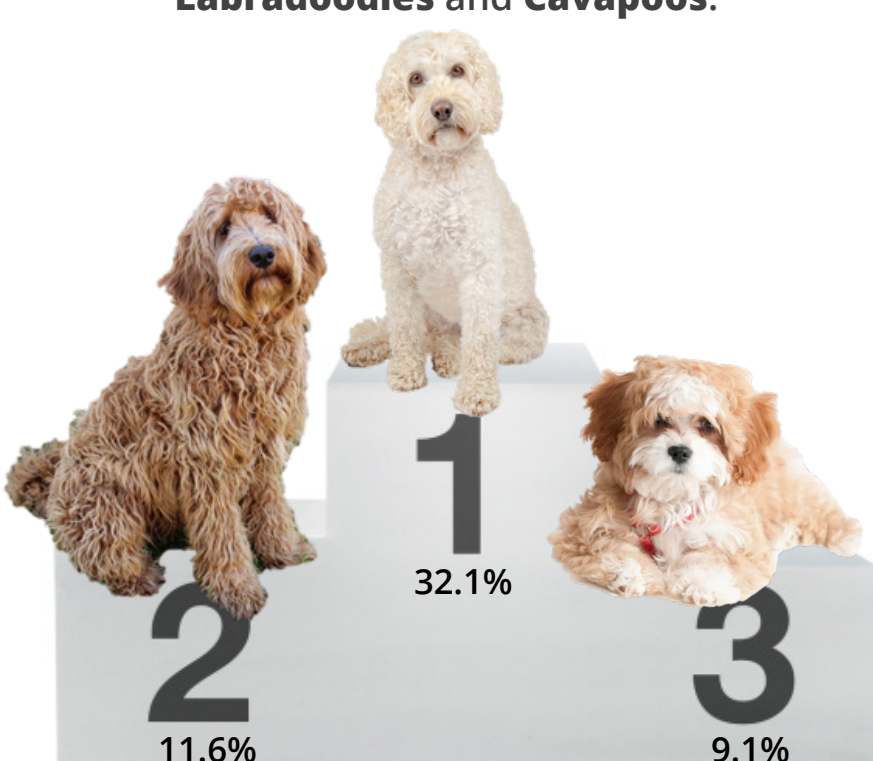
2020

More than 1 in 4 puppies purchased



MOST POPULAR DESIGNER BREEDS

The three most popular designer crossbreeds were **Cockapoos**, **Labradoodles** and **Cavapoos**.



WHY DO PEOPLE BUY DESIGNER CROSSBREDS?

The main reasons that designer crossbreed owners wanted to acquire a dog were for companionship (68.1%), exercise encouragement (63.3%), to improve their/their families mental health (55.2%) and companionship for their children (30.7%).

Compared to purebred puppy buyers, buyers of designer crossbreed puppies were more likely to be attracted to their dog's breed/crossbreed based on the following **preconceptions**:



Designer crossbreeds believed to be **Hypoallergenic**

Designer crossbreeds believed to be **Generally healthy**

Designer crossbreeds believed to be **Good with children**

Designer crossbreeds believed to be **Easy to train**

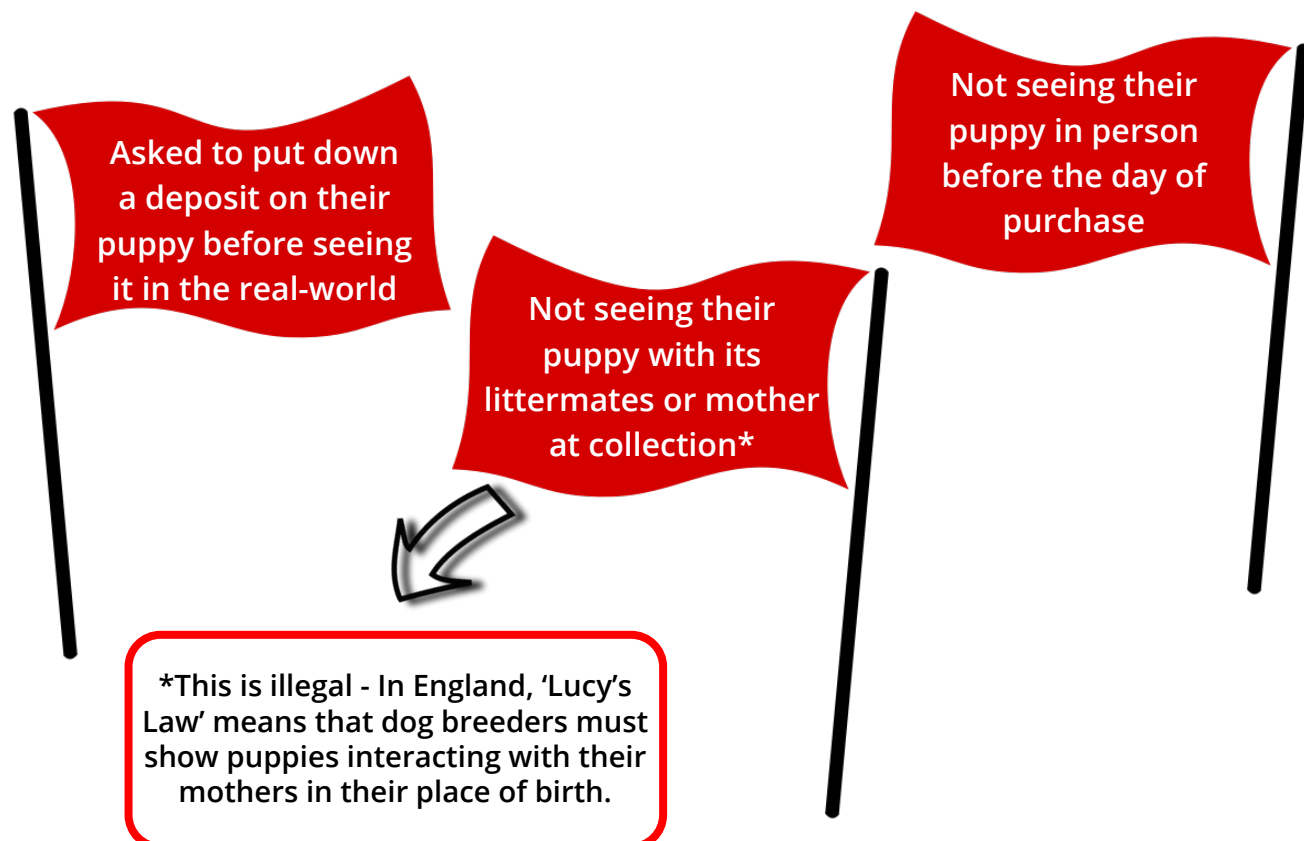


However, despite these common beliefs, there is no strong evidence that any of these 'facts' about designer crossbreeds are true. Owners should keep this in mind when purchasing a new puppy.

'RED FLAGS' OF WARNING WHEN PURCHASING PUPPIES

'Red flags' during the purchasing process are scenarios that put owners at increased risk of being deceived and purchasing their puppy from untrustworthy sources.

Owners who bought designer crossbreed dogs ignored more 'red flags' when buying their puppies compared to owners of purebred puppies.



By ignoring these important 'red flags', owners may unintentionally support **puppy farming** and **illegal imports** of puppies, inflicting major early-life stresses on puppies that could lead to lifelong behaviour and welfare consequences.

CONCLUSIONS

In the future, there may be increased relinquishment of designer crossbreeds as owners realise the reality of their misconceptions e.g. if dogs turn out not to be hypoallergenic.

The boom in demand for designer crossbreeds may pose health and welfare risks to these animals if they are bred without prioritising health.

Misconceptions could lead to an increase in dog bites if owners presume all designer crossbreeds are intrinsically child safe or well-behaved. Owners should familiarise themselves with dog behaviour and training.

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

CLICK TO READ FULL PAPER

E Burnett et al. (2022) "How much is that doodle in the window? Exploring motivations and behaviours of UK owners acquiring designer crossbreed dogs (2019-2020)" *Canine Medicine and Genetics*