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.

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.

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

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.

RED FLAGS' OF WARNING WHEN PURCHASING PUPPIES

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.

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

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

WHY DO PEOPLE BUY DESIGNER CROSSBREEDS?

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

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%).

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.

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CONCLUSIONS

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

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Most popular designer breeds

Designer crossbreed ownership in: 2019 2020

3.3% 32.1% 9.1%

Not seeing their puppy with its littermates, interaction at collection

Not having their puppy to see before the day of purchasing

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.