

## Future plans...

Keep reading to hear all about our exciting new projects:

- Pandemic Pals (exploring child-dog bonds)
- Popular Pooches (experiences of living with the UK's most popular types of dogs)
- What the Woof!



# NEWSLETTER

In November-December 2020 **7545 dog owners** responded to a survey from our Pandemic Puppies team at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC). This survey ended up being the biggest of its kind and led to two scientific papers, changing how we all understand the impact on dog welfare that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic – thank you! Since then, many of these owners who brought a puppy home between 23/3-31/12/2020 have completed further surveys as their dogs reached 21, 24 and 27 months of age - more about this on the next page.

## THE 'COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS'



**This is YOUR chance to tell us about the things that are affecting you, whether it is vet bills, the cost of dog food, or anything else - we want to know.**

This research will help us and other canine welfare organisations learn how to support owners like you during these potentially challenging times.

As dogs acquired between 23/3-31/12/2020 reach 36 months of age, owners are being sent a unique survey link to take part. Thank you to those that have already done so. This study is once again generously funded by **Battersea Dogs and Cats Home**.



## Longitudinal (21-27 month) surveys...

- 21 month closed 26/08/22, 1010 responses
- 24 month closed 26/11/2022, 1267 responses
- 27 month closed 26/2/23, 1222 responses

We are currently writing three papers, which will be sent directly to all owners who took part, based on the 21 months data about:

- Dog health
- Dog behaviour
- The dog-owner bond



# NEWSLETTER

## THE LONGITUDINAL STUDY

The 21, 24 and 27 month surveys, funded by **Battersea Dogs and Cats Home**, were launched back in January 2022. We have now finished collecting the data and have started analysis.

So far, amongst other things, we have found that '**problem behaviours**' were more frequently reported at 21 months in Pandemic Puppies compared to other studies of UK dogs. The top two most frequently reported behaviours at 21 months were:

### Pulling on the lead (over 67%)



### Jumping up at people (over 55%)



Only 14.7% however, reported that their dogs behaviour was worse than expected, with 38.8% telling us it was actually better than expected.

If you are struggling with any behaviours your dog is showing, and would like advice or to attend extra training classes (online), the following resources may be helpful:

<https://www.battersea.org.uk/pet-advice/dog-advice/search-dog-advice/how-train-your-dog-battersea-way>

For more information and links to our published papers see:

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

We are planning  
to produce  
regular  
Newsletters to  
keep you all up  
to date with our  
progress and  
news.

Would you and  
your dog like to  
feature?

Please email us on  
[pandemicpuppies@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:pandemicpuppies@rvc.ac.uk), and  
tell us all about  
your dog, ideally  
attaching a photo,  
and you could  
appear in an  
upcoming  
newsletter! Tell us  
what their  
favourite things  
are and any stories  
you would like to  
share.



# NEWSLETTER

## THE NEXT GENERATION...

### Pandemic Puppies: The Next Generation

In February-March 2022, **2827 owners** who brought home a puppy under the age of 16 weeks in 2021 kindly responded to a second survey from our Pandemic Puppies team at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC).

The results of this survey, which was a repeat of the survey we ran in 2020, are about to be published. We will of course share the results with you as soon as this happens.



### A news feature on Pandemic Puppies at 2-3 years of age

We have been approached by the BBC who are keen to run a national and regional series of TV, radio and online news features based upon owners talking about their experiences of getting a pet in the pandemic and what it was like coming through that into normality. We have contacted owners who have completed our longitudinal surveys to take part.

## THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS...



Research  
England



For more information and links to our published papers see:

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



## Media interest...

Since the first survey, the project has received lots of media interest including...

- The Independent
- The Daily Mail
- The Guardian
- ITV News
- BBC Radio 5 Live

amongst many others.

**People are  
interested in  
YOUR stories!**



# NEWSLETTER

## UPCOMING STUDIES

### Pandemic Pals: Exploring Child-Dog Bonds

Overall, child mental health has been documented to have deteriorated in the UK during the pandemic, potentially as a result of social restrictions imposed during periods of lockdown. We would like to explore how acquiring a dog during these challenging times may have helped support children's mental health with funding generously provided by the **Society for Companion Animal Studies (SCAS)**.



The criteria to take part are:

1. Filled in one of the initial surveys, having acquired a puppy during 2019, 2020 or 2021,
2. Opted into further research, and
3. Indicated they had children in their household

Owners who meet the above three criteria have been contacted with a unique link to complete a short survey about their households' experiences of owning a dog during the pandemic.

There is a survey for both adults and children (who are currently aged 8-17 inclusive). Adults need to give their consent for their children to take part and there is an option to opt out of either survey at the very beginning. We will not be collecting any identifying information and all responses will be anonymous.



## Popular pooches...



# NEWSLETTER

## UPCOMING STUDIES, CONTINUED...

### Popular Pooches: Exploring experiences of owning the UK's most popular breeds/crossbreeds

We would like to know what it's like to be the owner of some of the most popular dog breeds in the UK. We have contacted everyone who:

1. Filled in one of the initial surveys, having acquired a puppy during 2019, 2020 or 2021,
2. Opted into further research, and
3. Owns one of the following breeds/crossbreeds:

**Cavalier King Charles Spaniel,**  
**Cocker Spaniel** (working or show),  
**Labrador,**  
**Poodle** (miniature/standard/toy),  
**Cavapoo,**  
**Cockapoo,** or  
**Labradoodle**

to complete a short survey about their dogs health and behaviour and their experiences of owning these breeds/crossbreeds.

Once again there is an option to opt out of the survey at the very beginning.





## Scientific interest...

Since the first survey, the project has been presented at lots of meetings including...

- The All Parliamentary Dog Welfare Group
- Universities Federation of Animal Welfare
- Association of Dogs and Cats Homes

amongst many others, with more scheduled for 2023!



# NEWSLETTER

## UPCOMING STUDIES, CONTINUED...

### What the Woof?

We would like to know how owners find information and advice about your their behaviour if and when they need it. We will be contacting everyone who:

1. Filled in one of the initial surveys, having acquired a puppy during 2019, 2020 or 2021, and
2. Opted into further research

with a unique link to complete a short survey.

Once again there will be an option to opt out of the survey at the very beginning.



### What if I opted out of further studies but would now like to take part?

Pease email [pandemicpuppies@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:pandemicpuppies@rvc.ac.uk), with your dog's date of birth, breed and tell us whether you have a specific study you would like to be involved in or whether you are happy to be contacted about any of our future research plans.



# NEWSLETTER

## WHO ARE THE PANDEMIC PUPPIES TEAM?

**We've heard  
from you, now  
for you to hear  
all about us!**

We have also had a number of undergraduate students who have contributed to the project, including:

**Erin**, a vet student at the University of Nottingham completed a summer project in 2021.

**Katy**, a vet student at RVC completed her degree project in 2022.

**Michelle**, a vet student at RVC completed her degree project in 2022.

**Rowena** is the proud owner of a rescue Staffy cross, Sonny, whose favourite thing is cuddling on the sofa! Rowena has a PhD in Canine Welfare and leads a research team at RVC exploring many topics in this area including breed-related disease, the impact of health on behaviour, and dog-owner relationships. Rowena is the "Principal Investigator" for Pandemic Puppies and is responsible for acquiring project funding, generating new research ideas, supervising students working on the project and contributing to writing up and presenting findings.



**Claire** owns two English Springer Spaniels, Rosie & Morse, who's favourite pastimes involve being in water and getting muddy! Claire has a PhD in Molecular Genetics and is studying for a MSc in Clinical Animal Behaviour through Edinburgh University. Claire has been the main researcher for Pandemic Puppies at RVC since 2020, helping to organise the different projects, supervise students, analyse data, contribute to writing up and present findings. Claire is currently writing the 21 month behaviour paper and focusing upon the Cost-of-Living and Pandemic Pals surveys.

**Dan** is a vet and founded the VetCompass project at RVC as part of his PhD. VetCompass uses records from over 30% of all UK vet practices to study conditions including cancer, skin disease and heart disease in companion animals. Dan is a health data expert and is responsible within Pandemic Puppies for designing health components of the surveys, overseeing statistical analysis and supervising students.





# NEWSLETTER

## WHO ARE THE PANDEMIC PUPPIES TEAM?

**We've heard from you, now for you to hear all about us!**

**Tessa**, a vet student at Liverpool University completed her degree project this year.

**Georgie**, a vet student at RVC is starting her degree project in 2023.

**Saskia**, a vet student at RVC is starting her degree project in 2023.



**Zoe** is a European and RCVS recognised specialist vet in small animal medicine who works at a PDSA clinic. Zoe also completed a PhD in the welfare of dogs with osteoarthritis. Zoe is an expert in "qualitative research methods" (categorising peoples responses in the 'other' text boxes, for example), and designing surveys. Zoe also contributes to the health components of the surveys.

**Fiona** completed a PhD in Canine Behaviour, specialising in separation-related behaviours, which was funded by the Dogs Trust. Fiona also works on VetCompass looking into breed-related diseases and producing research 'infographics'. Fiona is currently writing the 21 month health paper, supervises students and contributes to survey design, as well as maintaining the groups research webpage.



**Camilla** is a vet and PhD student within VetCompass who helped extensively with categorising the health data from the first survey. Camilla is also an expert in statistical analysis.



# NEWSLETTER

## WHO ARE THE PANDEMIC PUPPIES TEAM?

**Thank you for all  
your support.**

Since 2020,  
almost **14000**  
people have  
responded to our  
Pandemic Puppy  
surveys – making  
each and  
everyone of you  
part of a large,  
special and  
unique project  
with animal  
welfare at its  
core.

**Gina** is a current MRes student exploring owner experiences of popular dog breeds in the UK. She has a 1st class degree in Bioveterinary Science from RVC and is passionate about all aspects of animal welfare and behaviour. She works, alongside her masters, teaching children in Hong Kong about conservation and wildlife. Gina is the owner of two very mischievous English Springer Spaniels, Harry (pictured) and Coco, who make her laugh daily and become her regular travel companions around the UK.



**Bree** is lead RVC vet at Woodgreen Pets Charity, currently studying for a MSc in Veterinary Epidemiology, also at RVC. Bree has a PGDip in Companion Animal Behaviour Counselling, and a particular interest in shelter medicine and dog-owner relationships. She is writing the 21 month dog-owner bonds paper as part of her MSc.

**Sophie** is the owner of two rescue dogs Elvis (pictured) and Daisy whose favourite things include long walks, squirrels and agility! Sophie has a BSc in Biology and Anthropology and is studying for an MSc in Clinical Animal Behaviour through the University of Edinburgh. As part of this course Sophie is currently undertaking her thesis project which is contributing to the ongoing Pandemic Puppy research.

