

Skin fold dermatitis results from skin friction, moisture and lack of ventilation deep in skin folds, and can be very painful and irritating. Skin folds can occur within typical conformation (body shape) in some breeds, or can follow obesity or skin diseases. Dramatically rising popularity of several flat-faced (brachycephalic) breeds has worsened the welfare impact from skin fold dermatitis on dogs at a population level.

This study aimed to investigate the frequency, welfare impact and clinical management of skin fold dermatitis in dogs in the UK. This evidence can help owners to make health-focused decisions on which dogs to buy to avoid harmful skin fold infections.

Total number of dogs in the study

905,553

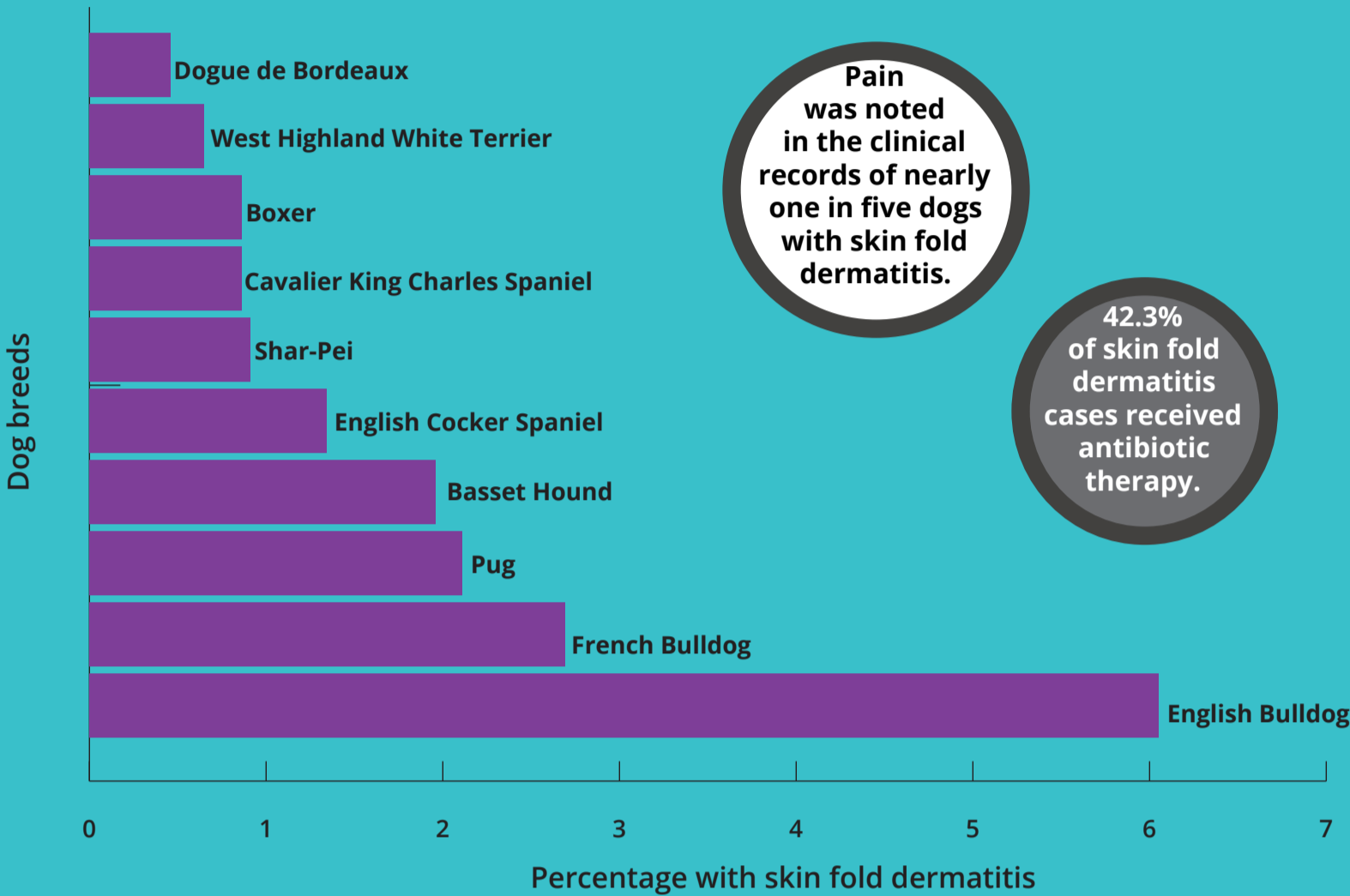
Proportion of UK dogs overall diagnosed with skin fold dermatitis each year

0.37%  
(1 in 300)



## Breed prevalence of skin fold dermatitis

Breeds with the highest proportion of skin fold dermatitis



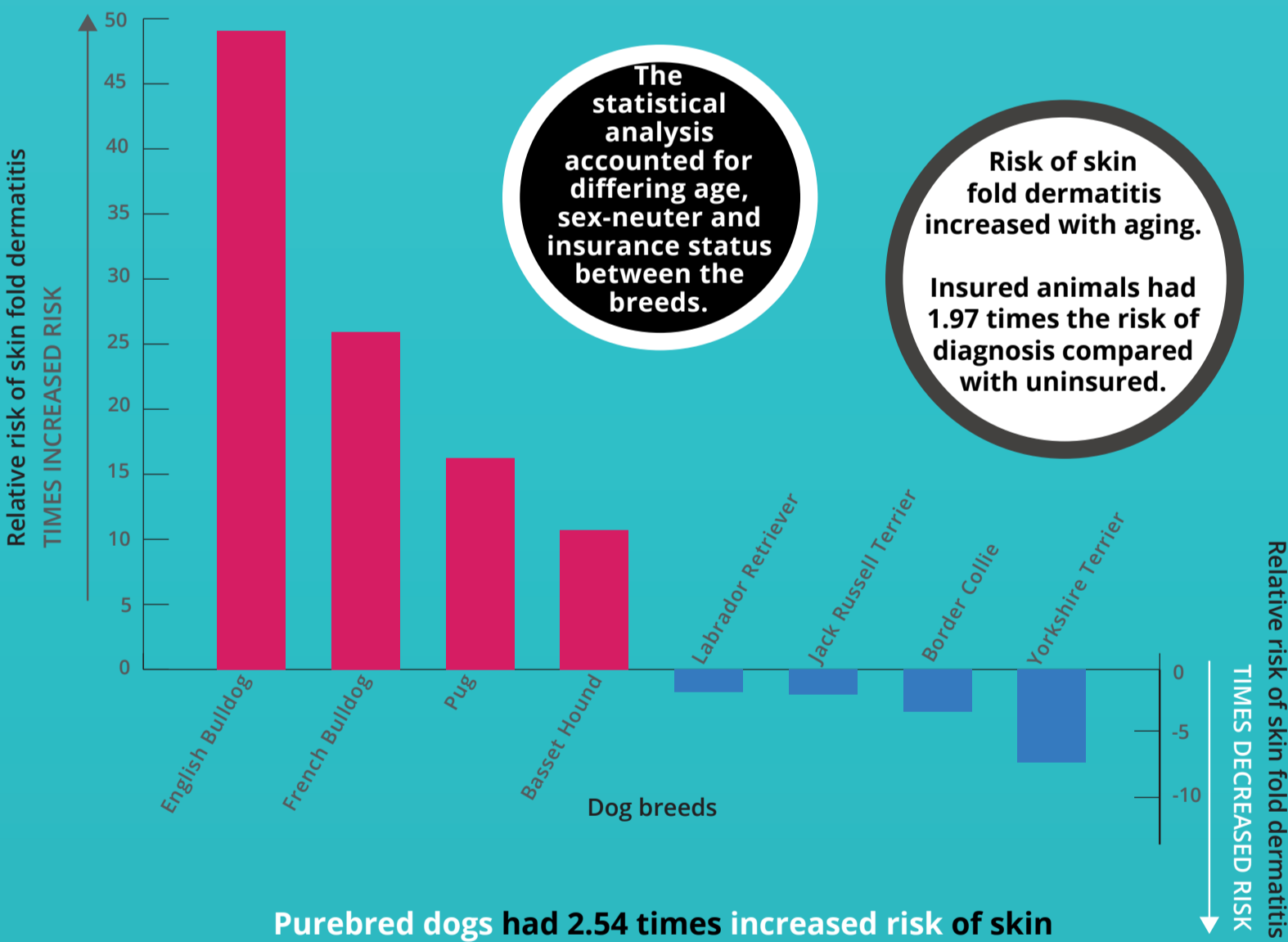
Pain was noted in the clinical records of nearly one in five dogs with skin fold dermatitis.

42.3% of skin fold dermatitis cases received antibiotic therapy.

Five breeds had no recorded cases of skin fold dermatitis: Cavachon, Miniature Dachshund, Pomeranian, Rottweiler, and Toy Poodle.

## Breed relative risk of skin fold dermatitis

Breeds with the highest and lowest risk of skin fold dermatitis compared to crossbred dogs overall



The statistical analysis accounted for differing age, sex-neuter and insurance status between the breeds.

Risk of skin fold dermatitis increased with aging.

Insured animals had 1.97 times the risk of diagnosis compared with uninsured.

Purebred dogs had 2.54 times increased risk of skin fold dermatitis compared with crossbred dogs.



Flat-faced (brachycephalic) dogs had 4.51 times the risk of skin fold dermatitis overall, compared with dogs with medium length skulls.



## CONCLUSIONS:

Skin fold dermatitis is often a chronic problem requiring life-long care. Before purchasing a breed with marked skin folding, owners should commit to the dog's need for life-long skin care.

Breed-typical skin folds promote undesirable antibiotic use in dogs.

By moving away from extreme body shape such as short skulls in highly predisposed breeds such as English Bulldog, French Bulldog and Pug, future generations could be protected from skin fold dermatitis.

This research adds further evidence to the welfare concerns around high popularity of dog breeds with extreme body shapes. The message to anyone considering getting a dog is to 'Stop and think before buying a flat-faced dog'.

[CLICK TO READ THE FULL STUDY](#)

O'Neill et al. (2022) "Ironing out the wrinkles and folds in the epidemiology of skin fold dermatitis in dog breeds in the UK" Journal of Small Animal Practice

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.