

Pandemic Puppies: Is UK Puppy-Purchasing Suffering a Long COVID effect?



- The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic led to a worldwide increase in puppy-buying, the so-called '**Pandemic Puppy**' phenomenon
- The Pandemic Puppies research programme has documented **changes in how and why people purchased puppies** during the **peak 2020 phase of the pandemic** compared to pre-pandemic 2019 purchases, documenting concerning changes that threaten dog welfare **e.g., puppies being bought without owners seeing their mum, away from where they were bred**
- However a big question is **whether those changes returned to their pre-pandemic baseline** in the later phase of the Pandemic (2021) or had persisted as a '**new normal**' for UK puppy purchasing

This study aimed to explore pre-purchase and purchase motivations and behaviours of puppy owners who **purchased a puppy in 2021** compared to the 2020 phase of the COVID-19 pandemic (peak-pandemic) and 2019 (pre-pandemic)

Puppy buying behaviour in 2021 compared to previous years (2019 %, 2020 %, 2021 %)

Returned to pre-pandemic baseline

- **Puppy seen with their mother (86%, 75%, 85%)**
- **Deposit put down before seeing the puppy (9%, 17%, 11%)**

Improved, but had not yet returned to pre-pandemic baseline

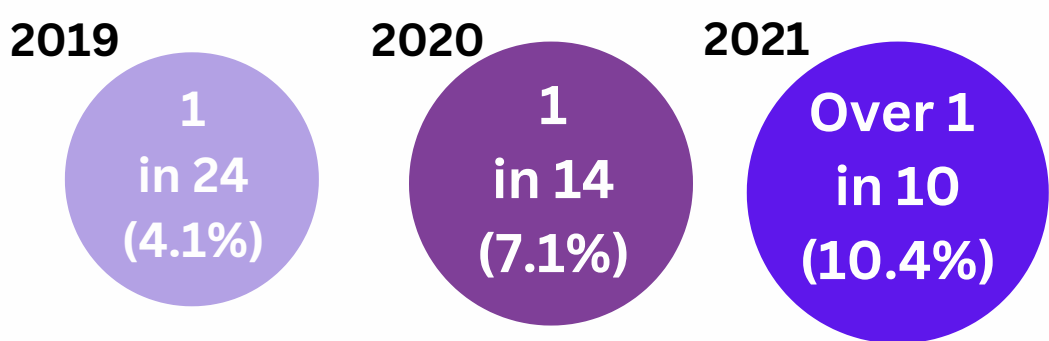
- Puppy viewed pre-purchase over live video calls or via video recordings/photos rather than in-person (31%, 52%, 40%)** ←
- Puppy viewed in-person before purchase (81%, 60%, 70%)** ←
- Puppy collected from inside breeder's property (85%, 51%, 67%)** ←

Exacerbated or newly worsened from peak-pandemic

- **Owners seeking a breed/crossbreed based on health (45%, 48%, 38%)**
- **Rise in puppy prices (Price over £2000-£2999: 1.8%, 24%, 26%)**

Concerning trend in 2021: Puppies sold with a passport

Concerningly, there was a **year on year increase** in puppies sold with **passports** from 2019 to 2021



An increasing number of puppies sold with a passport were **under the minimum legal age (15 weeks) to be imported to the UK** → These puppies are likely to have been **illegally imported** from the EU for commercial sale.

Many owners may be unaware of the **welfare and public health implications** of importing puppies to the UK, including **puppies being bred in poor (but unseen) conditions, transported for long distances** without their mother, and exposed to **infectious diseases** that can be **transmitted to other dogs and people**.

Legal restrictions to puppy importation are urgently required to protect puppy welfare

For more information visit

www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass/research-projects-and-opportunities/projects/rvc-pandemic-puppies-survey

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