The Kennel Club

Health & Breeding

End of Year Review 2025

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As 2025 comes to a close we have summarised our activity throughout the year and hope this serves as a useful reference to what we've achieved and what's to come.

Crufts 2025

At the start of the year, we continued our presence of health testing at Crufts 2025, providing the following:

- The RFG Scheme health entry requirement for Bulldogs, French Bulldogs and Pugs was successfully implemented at Crufts 2025. Fosse Data delivered an integrated certificate upload and validation system, ensuring all UK and overseas dogs over 14 months held a RFG Scheme assessment prior to attending the event.

- Respiratory Function Grading scheme assessments to French Bulldogs, Bulldogs and Pugs, with 76 dogs in total tested during the event.

- Some 225 dogs were able to benefit from discounted eye testing appointments.

- We participated in a peak time televised discussion on Channel 4 TV, emphasising the importance of health considerations in brachycephalic breeds, and teamed up with social media influencers to voice the importance of health testing prior to breeding.

- This year's vet students were given access to specialist lectures, including topics on breeder-vet relations with Dr Alison Skipper and using veterinary evidence to counter our beliefs when it comes to canine health, with Dr Dan O'Neill.

Breed Watch

Following the conclusion of the Breed Watch review we have made several changes to improve and protect dogs within the show ring. These include:

Health entry-criteria for three breeds

At Crufts 2026, all eligible French Bulldogs, Bulldogs and Pugs must have a valid Respiratory Function Grading certificate in order to attend the event, this was in place for 2025, however from 2026 both dogs graded **3 and 2** will not be allowed to attend the show. Full details can be found here.

Judges' Health Monitoring Form

Following feedback on the new digital Judges' Health Monitoring Form, we have developed a video guide demonstrating how to complete the form and outlining the supporting resources available. This guide is now available on our website, allowing judges to familiarise themselves with the health monitoring process both before and after their appointments.

Breed Watch analysis

We will be completing breed-specific analysis of Breed Watch data up to end of 2025 in the new year and will ensure you are provided with your breed's report once available.

Digital development

The team have worked to implement a number of updates to the Health Test Results Finder (HTRF) and a dog's record, which we hope will improve the functionality and overall experience of the website. These include:

- **Showing all health test tiles and missing results on HTRF**

Previously, dogs with no health tests looked more complete than those with partial results. This update makes sure every test tile shows up on a record, either with a result or a 'no record held' message.

- **Added expiry dates to HTRF**

Expiry dates are now shown next to all relevant test results on HTRF, so people can see if a test is still valid. This has also been added for historic results for dogs born within the last 12 years. We are currently undergoing a review of the testing frequency for eye testing with the BVA so this change has not been applied to eye testing at this time. This change has not yet been linked to Find a Puppy icon allocation, but is an upcoming change that we will keep you updated with.

- **Reporting of multiple conditions under the BVA/KC/ISDS Eye Scheme**

We are now able to record additional eye observations made under the eye scheme e.g., distichiasis, which will enable us to more effectively pull this data from our system. These observations will not be published at this time on a dog's record, however we are also reviewing how best to portray where an observation has been made.

- **Recognising where a dog has been tested using an overseas/ international scheme**

This has allowed us to add substitute tests to the Health Standard, so dogs tested under approved overseas schemes (e.g. ANKC) can still meet the Find a Puppy Health Standard icon criteria. The results themselves are not published, but an explanation is provided to show a dog has been tested and the results are held by the owner.

To be eligible, results must come from an official international screening scheme, relate to a condition listed on the Health Standard, use a comparable screening method to the UK equivalent, and include the dog's Kennel Club registered name or number and microchip number.

Since opening the process, 200 international health results have been successfully recorded, providing another positive step in recognising responsible breeding practices and enabling wider visibility of health screening.

- **Upcoming – Review of Health Test Results Finder**

We are reviewing Health Test Results Finder to better understand how it is being used and identify areas for improvement. Our aim is to ensure the tool effectively meets the needs of both breeders and puppy buyers. To achieve this, we will analyse existing data, launch short instructional videos and targeted surveys, and collect additional feedback through focus groups and interviews.

Similarly, we are developing a breeder insights survey to understand the factors influencing breeding decisions, including demographics and background, breeding practices, health and welfare considerations, economics, regulation and licensing, and breeder attitudes and motivations.

Breeder mentoring and canine midwifery

In 2025, we began development of the Breeder Mentoring & Canine Midwifery Programme, a new initiative designed to support fledgling breeders by connecting them with experienced, reputable breeders. Developed in partnership with ROYAL CANIN® and James Wellbeloved™, the programme aims to build confidence, embed responsible breeding practices from the outset, and strengthen the breeder community.

Applications to become a breeder mentor opened in autumn 2025, inviting experienced breeders from across the UK to help shape the programme. In December, we hosted the first Breeder Mentor & Canine Midwifery Day at the Waltham Petcare Science Institute, bringing together a diverse group of newly appointed mentors. The day focused on education, collaboration and co-design, allowing mentors to share lived experience and shape the early framework of the programme. Feedback and insights gathered during this event will inform the programme's structure and delivery ahead of its planned rollout in 2026.

Supporting breeders

Throughout 2025, we have been working on a number of improvements to better support our breeder community. From January 2026, we will introduce a new puppy buyer feedback process, enabling improved engagement with new owners and providing valuable, anonymised feedback to breeders. This will help highlight strengths, identify opportunities for improvement, and allow us to better understand wider trends so we can enhance the experience for breeders and puppy buyers alike.

Alongside this, we have developed a new breeder feedback process for staff to use when breeders share suggestions or raise concerns. This ensures feedback is captured more consistently and fed into our ongoing service improvement work. Breeders play a vital role in shaping our services, and this structured approach will help us better understand what is working well and where changes are needed.

We are also beginning a review of endorsements, starting with a survey of breeders who currently use them, to explore how this system could be improved. In addition, we are prioritising the development of a new Find a Breeder service and are currently exploring potential solutions, with a further update expected in 2026.

Breed Health and Conservation Plans and the new Breeding for Health Framework

As many of you will know, this year we have embarked on a major review of our pedigree dog health work, led by Dr Alison Skipper who joined our team in January.

During the year we met with over sixty breeders, Breed Health Co-ordinators, vets, geneticists, academic researchers and pedigree dog health campaigners, and asked them for their views on our current health work. We wanted to know what we are currently doing well, where we can improve and what new areas we should focus on in the future.

What did people say to us?

- **Genetic diversity and inbreeding**

  We should do more to help breeders support genetic diversity and reduce inbreeding. This is a complicated topic and problems vary greatly between breeds, so we need a flexible approach that addresses these issues in different ways.

- **Extreme conformation**

  Although most breeds have healthy body shapes, extreme conformation remains a major issue for some. Canine health experts thought we should do more to address this problem.

- **Breed-related disease and wellbeing**

  People explained what works well with our health testing policies and services and what they thought should change. We received very useful feedback across a wide range of topics.

- **Outreach and communication**

  We need to work harder to reach different audiences, such as breeders, puppy buyers and veterinary professionals, to explain our health work and promote good practice in dog breeding.

What are we going to do?

This review has shown that we already support breeding for health effectively in some ways, but our health work has some gaps and weaknesses. We need to provide comprehensive and relevant support and governance for all breed communities, even though problems and appropriate solutions differ enormously between breeds. We also realise that we can't provide separate support for all 225 breeds that we currently recognise.

Therefore, we are launching a new Royal Kennel Club Breeding for Health Framework. This covers all aspects of health and welfare that should influence breeding decisions for any breed or type of dog. The framework considers inbreeding/genetic diversity, conformation, and breed-related disease/wellbeing. This will help us to plan our future health work and gives breeders a clear guide to the topics they should consider when breeding for health.

Using the Breeding for Health Framework, we can group all the breeds that share a certain issue together, so that we can provide targeted support and breed communities can share relevant

experiences and expertise. This will help everyone deal more effectively with that issue. The breeds that are grouped together will vary according to the issue, meaning that each breed will have an overall grouping profile that provides tailored support for its needs.

During 2026, we will be prioritising work that addresses the top row of the Breeding for Health Framework:

- We will be developing ways to support genetic diversity in small populations
- We will be developing the Royal Kennel Club Nose-to-Tail Visual Assessment for visible conformation
- We will be improving our approach to testable health conditions in several ways

Genetic diversity	Conformation	Breed-related disease and wellbeing
Population size	Visible conformation	Testable conditions
Harmful breeding practices/ popular sires	Distinctive breed features of potential concern	Untestable conditions
Limited pedigree data	Conformational 'creep'	Temperament/mental wellbeing

Our full report will share comprehensive insights from the review process and explains the Breeding for Health framework in detail. We will come to breeds in the new year to let them know about next steps and where breeds fit within these categories, as well as share the full report with you when it is available. We are in the beginnings of some of our work here, with several testable condition and Nose-to-Tail focus groups already underway, but more will be coming as we evolve this process.

With the above programme of work, the Breed Health and Conservation Plans (BHCP) will be phased into the Breeding for Health Framework, and we are in development of mechanisms to better process data and evidence, to ensure our approach continues to be evidence-based and led by current data. We will continue to consider ways to better share the findings from these evidence-bases with our communities and have heard clearly that the current structure and format of BHCPs has been a barrier to sharing data more widely. We will keep you updated as this progresses into 2026.

Breed Health Community Day 2025 and 2026

On the 20th September we held our first in-person health day for several years and were really pleased to be joined by over 80 Breed Health Coordinators and to have the opportunity to see many of you face to face again!

The slides and presentations from the day can be found on the BHC portal.

We appreciate a number of you were interested in being able to watch Sharon's Leogen presentation from the breed health community day, which has now been uploaded to the group's YouTube channel and can be found here.

So that we have plenty of time to prepare for next year's event, we will be holding this again in September 2026, on **Saturday the 12th**. Make sure you mark this in your calendar and more details will come soon!

Also please let us know what you'd like to see and particular topics you think we should bring speakers in for, and if you yourself would like to share your own individual experiences from your breed that could be applied in others and would be willing to speak to the group, please let us know!

The Health Standard

January will mark one year since the Health Standard was launched and the feedback we've received over the last year is that the initiative is generally now well received, having had some teething problems towards the beginning. We will be continuing to update and reflect latest updates in health-specific screening as new data become available, with an updated version to be made available in early 2026. If you as BHC would like to make any further tweaks, please reach out to Hannah who would be happy to discuss this further with you.

Reviewing the names of categories

We have heard this year that some of the wording used by the RKC isn't working or landing properly with our audiences, and this has come through with respect to the naming of Good Practice and Best Practice, in particular Good Practice. With this, when we update the Health Standard in 2026 we will be looking to amend the name of Good Practice, to try to better encapsulate that breeders should be undertaking tests within this category as a minimum standard in breeding whilst we're still in our infancy with the Health Standard. We will update you all accordingly, and of course make sure this is communicated more widely.

Genetic diversity

Genetic diversity remains a key priority for all of us, however we have heard and agree with the feedback that at the moment the addition of genetic diversity as a Good Practice test is not helpful, particularly when it comes to novices, as there are a number of different nuances to genetic diversity that need to be considered. As you will see from the Breeding for Health Framework (page 8) we will be progressing this area of canine health as we move into 2026 and finding better ways to support these breeds. As such we will be removing reference from the Health Standard, keeping this to testable conditions only.

Conformation

Supporting breeders with breeding for conformation that enables good quality of life is core to our Breeding for Health Framework, so it is a priority to expand our work in this area and offer tools for breeders and guidance for breeders, exhibitors, judges and puppy seekers to compliment and evolve our Breed Watch guidance. In 2026 we are starting as indicated with developing the RKC Nose-to-tail veterinary assessment, a programme of work which we hope to launch in November 2026. Further guidance on conformation from RKC will start in 2026 and continue over the coming years as we work through the Breeding for Health Framework. With this in mind we are limiting the Health Standard to listing testable conditions.

Health Standard dashboard

We are pleased to share some data with you on uptake of health testing across breeds within the health standard. You can see the latest Health Standard dashboard, outlining breed compliance, towards the end of the report.

Community challenge

At the Breed Health Community day we launched the Health Standard community challenge, which has been developed to tap into our collective resources to drive health testing uptake and awareness across our communities. The RKC also have a number of initiatives planned to reach novice and experienced owners and help drive uptake, but we appreciate that a lot of these messages around health testing can be generic to try to reach all breeds, and as such by utilising our collective skills we hope we can make as big an impact as possible, and learn from you all on how best to sculpt our own messaging in the future.

The challenge is open from the 1st October 2025, and will close in March 2026, with the winning team to be announced shortly after this date.

If you would like to get involved, or are already showcasing health awareness in your breed, please do sign-up. **There will be a prize for the winning team!**

Breed health community challenge 2025 entries

RKC Nose-to-tail assessment

This year we announced the development of the RKC Nose-to-tail assessment, which will support breeders to breed for conformation that enables good quality of life. As such, as we move into 2026 we would greatly appreciate the input of our BHCs and breed communities to explore what criteria would be feasible to include in the assessment, which will be built using available evidence, and making sure it is repeatable as a veterinary assessment. We are in particular looking for breeds where we know there are conformational concerns, which could cover any area of the dog (e.g., doesn't need to be several areas of concern, but could be just one area, such as short legs).

We will be holding a number of focus group sessions in January and February. If you would be interested in joining any of these sessions, or would like to nominate one or two representatives who have lived experiences (either currently or previously) with a relevant breed, please do complete the below form.

RKC Nose-to-tail (N2T) focus group session interest

Breed club health schemes

We have reached out already to several of you to request you send us a copy of any breed club health scheme that your breed currently runs that considers aspects of conformation and would be very grateful if we could continue to collect these to help us build the RKC N2T. If a copy of your club's certificate could be sent to the Health Team, this would be very much appreciated.

Merle

Our upcoming RKC Nose-to-tail focus groups are considering body shape and will not be discussing health issues related to colouration, such as merle. We plan to hold a merle focus group later in 2026 and will circulate a call for participants nearer the time.

Patella luxation

Towards the end of this year we have met with a number of general practice vets, breeders and the BVA to embark on a feasibility study in terms of the development of a formal patella luxation scheme. We appreciate that there has been strong appetite for such a scheme for many years, so hope it will be good news to many of you that we are now in the early stages of development. We will keep you updated as this progresses.

Cardiology Development

This year, we have continued our collaboration with the Veterinary Cardiovascular Society on our five-year cardiology development programme. Key activities are outlined below:

Webinars

In addition to our previous health webinars, you can also watch the following webinars from our heart series on YouTube here. The series begins with an introduction to heart disease by Dr Hannah Stephson, followed by a webinar on acquired heart disease presented by Dr Emily Dutton, and concluded with a session on congenital heart disease led by Dr Chris Linney.

Boxer Heart Scheme Development

The Boxer Breed Council's current recommendations for the control of aortic stenosis (AS) relies on auscultation only, with grade 1 murmurs being accepted as normal and therefore suitable for breeding purposes. However, during October's heart screening session, the cardiologists confirmed variation in murmur detection and grading. These observations indicate that an auscultation-only approach may

benefit from further refinement, as mild murmurs may not always be detected, while in other cases dogs may be excluded where this may not be necessary.

To refine the screening protocol, the RKC/VCS held a dedicated Boxer Heart Scheme Development Day on 28th October. The event assessed 28Boxers through both auscultation and echocardiography. In a follow-up session with the cardiologists (Dr Hannah Stephenson and Dr Dave Fisher) and representatives from the Boxer Breed Council on 4th December, the outcomes from the Boxer Heart Scheme Development Day were discussed as well as possible next steps, such as development of an official AS Scheme, with a possible traffic light system for breeding recommendations. If successful, the scheme could be formally recognised within the Health Standard, encouraging wider participation in heart testing.

Impact of anxiolytic medication on the canine heart

Due to the known challenges of screening Bull Terriers and Miniature Bull Terriers, the development of formal schemes for these breeds hinges on the feasibility of using anxiolytic medication to calm the dogs prior to screening. An ethical approval form for a study investigating the effects of anxiolytic medication on the heart of 'lively' (non-breed specific) dogs has been completed and is currently with Dr Hannah Stephenson (member of VCS) for submission to the RCVS Ethics Committee. Once ethical approval is secured, the RKC will support dedicated screening days for Bull Terriers and Miniature Bull Terriers.

Online heart test form

A key objective of this programme is to standardise data collection by introducing an online heart screening form for use by all VCS members, applicable across all breeds. This is an important step towards ensuring that future data is gathered consistently and stored in a centralised system. The online form has now been developed and was trialled at the recent Boxer Heart Scheme Development Day. We are now seeking final feedback from the Veterinary Cardiovascular Society (VCS), after which the form will be formally launched. Once implemented, all VCS heart assessments will move to the new digital system, and the current paper-based forms will be phased out.

Health Surveys

Our survey about spinal issues remains open, and we strongly encourage you to complete it and share it widely within your communities if you haven't already. The survey is open to all breeds and has received 3,454 responses to date. While the response so far has been excellent, we would welcome additional submissions to ensure the data is as robust and representative as possible.

Please note that the spinal survey will close in **Q1 2026**, so we encourage participation before then.

Please click here to participate

Health Testing Clinics

As a reminder, we offer a guidance and benefits package for those hosting health testing clinics, which we launched in 2023. This initiative is designed to support and incentivise individuals who regularly hold testing sessions. If you or someone you know would be interested in getting involved, please find out more here.

Since launching the clinic host initiative, we now have seven independent, active clinic hosts listed on our website, covering different regions of the country. These hosts can be contacted by breeders to help arrange testing sessions where no suitable clinics are currently available. Their work plays an important role in making health testing more accessible.

In addition, we have listed over 350 health testing clinics this year on our website, enabling breeders to find local clinics offering a range of pre-breeding health screening. This represents a significant community effort involving breed clubs, veterinarians and breeders, all working together to ensure health screening remains accessible and as affordable as possible.

The Kennel Club/University of Cambridge Respiratory Function Grading Scheme

The Respiratory Function Grading (RFG) Scheme continues to grow, with 47 active assessors and licensing now established in 22 countries internationally. In November, we held our annual review meeting with all active assessors, providing an opportunity to discuss emerging research, share experiences, and address challenges within the scheme.

Dr Francesca Tomlinson presented findings from the University of Cambridge's most recent research, and the day also included practical sessions with volunteers bringing dogs of other breeds. This allowed assessors to apply the RFG protocols to additional breeds in preparation for the scheme's planned expansion in 2026. Participation in the scheme is provided further down in the report, included as health scheme data 2025.

RFG expansion

We have a number of breeds that the BOAS research group have established as candidates for scheme expansion and have met with the breeds in November to walk through next steps and how a scheme will be implemented for them. Updates will be

made to the Health Standard, and it is hoped that we can incorporate voluntary RFG testing at no cost for these breeds at Crufts 2026. This research will be published in a scientific paper, which is expected to appear towards the end of 2025/ early 2026.

Scientific Publication on heritability of the RFG Scheme

Dr Joanna Ilska has been working to establish the inheritance of BOAS and associated disease in French Bulldogs, Bulldogs and Pugs, based on the data we have recorded under the RFG Scheme. It is aimed that the paper will be submitted for publication towards the end of the year and that the breeding guidelines for the RFG scheme can be amended following its publication. A copy will be share with the H&BAG once available.

Promotion

This year, we ran a regional "Meet Your Assessor" promotional campaign for the RFG Scheme. This involved emailing owners in areas local to assessors to introduce them to the scheme, highlight its importance, and connect them with their local assessor. We will continue this initiative into 2026 and are also exploring other opportunities to raise awareness of the scheme.

RKC/DHUK IVDD Scheme for Dachshunds (all varieties)

This year, we focused on developing resources for participating centres of the IVDD Scheme to better support them and increase testing availability in 2026. In collaboration with the University of Cambridge, we produced a positioning video that will be made available to all existing and new centres to assist with taking radiographs.

We also continued the subsidy for a final year, providing £100 per dog. Since the scheme launched in 2021, the subsidy has provided £20,000 in financial support to owners. The subsidy is now closed.

BVA Canine Health Schemes

BVA/KC/ISDS Eye Scheme

This year has seen a number of changes being made to the way in which we record grades for pectinate ligament abnormality (PLA)/ goniodysgenesis under the scheme, following feedback from our breed communities and in particular the flagging of discrepancies between grade 0 and grade 1 dogs. We held a meeting with the BVA, the scheme's Chief Panellist, and representatives from PLA breeds back in September, and are pleased to report that as of January 2026 there will be changes made to the scheme to address this feedback. This involves the merging of grade 0 and grade 1 dogs, because the panellists consider that growing evidence suggests there is no meaningful difference between these two categories, moving us to a 3-point system.

We have been assured by the BVA that the certificate will be updated to reflect this, and further that additional information (e.g., a handout) will be available to owners at the time of assessment to detail

this change. We will also update our website with overarching advice with respect to this. We would be happy for you to share this news with your community and please continue to feedback to us their comments.

We are also in the process of running a glaucoma survey with the BVA to better understand the association between grades and onset of clinical disease. The survey is still open so we'd hugely appreciate any extra awareness you can bring to this, and we will let you know the findings as soon as they are available.

BVA/KC Schemes pricing

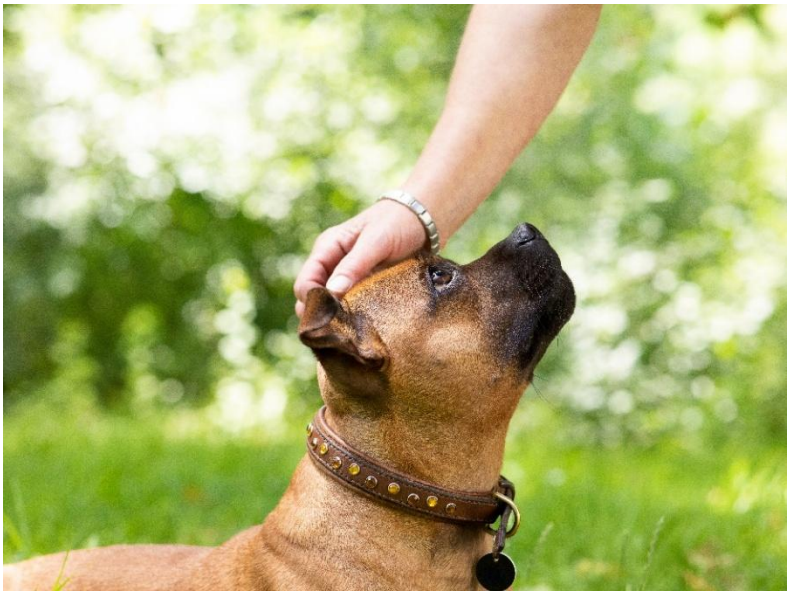
The BVA will putting up their administration fees from 2026, which can be found here.

2025 Canine Health Schemes overview

Participation in the BVA schemes is provided, included as health scheme data 2025.

Webinars

Our webinar series has received 31,825 views to date. Don't worry if you missed any as you can still watch them for free on our YouTube channel here.



We look forward to further developing the series in 2026, with upcoming topics including the history of conformation presented by Dr Alison Skipper and RFG heritability with Dr Joanna Ilska. Further details, including dates, will be shared in due course.

If there are additional topics you would like us to explore in the future, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please get in touch with the team to share your suggestions.

Population Analysis

Themed workshop sessions

This year we have held 3 sessions with BHCs to delve deeper into the population analyses and the common themes that have come from your communities. This is encapsulated fully in the Future for Dog Breeding report, due to be published and shared with you in early 2026, but a number of themes can through when considering genetic diversity, including:

- Missing or incorrect data and shallow pedigrees
- Artificial insemination
- Better recording of information against litters
- Recording genetic COIs
- Popular sire syndrome
- Making our database and health provision more relevant to subpopulations
- Average relatedness tool
- Parental verification

Paper publication

Our paper (Modern pedigree dogs in the United Kingdom Kennel Club: a journey through shifting population landscapes and demography), led by Dr Joanna Ilska, was published in April, and so far has been accessed over 5,000 times.

Dog Health News Facebook page

As many of you know we have our own RKC health news page (link below), and will be turning to this to deliver more of our notification style updates over time (e.g., recognition of a new DNA test).

Dog Health News | Royal Kennel Club | Facebook

We also want to celebrate the incredible work being done to improve the health and welfare of our beloved dog breeds! If you're a Breed Health Coordinator (BHC) or are involved in health initiatives within your breed community, we invite you to submit exciting updates, achievements, and milestones.

Whether it's a new health initiative, a health breakthrough, or an individual who's made a significant impact in advancing health within the breed, we want to hear about it! By sharing these stories, we aim to spotlight and recognise the tireless efforts of breed communities to champion health and welfare, as well as inspire others to take similar action.
Your submission will likely be featured on our Facebook page to celebrate the progress being made in the breed health landscape. Thank you for your dedication and for helping us promote better health for our dogs!

Breed Health Spotlight: Share Your Breed's Health Achievements and Initiatives – Fill in form

Ongoing Operational Work

Alongside strategic initiatives, we have managed a substantial volume of day-to-day operations that keep the breeder, owner and veterinary community supported. In 2025, we have responded to over 2,500 emails via the health and breeding inbox, handled more than 600 phone calls from breeders, owners, and veterinary professionals, and processed over 43,000 health test results into the system. We also produced annual statistics for each health scheme, made these publicly available on the website, and updated the PDF lists of tested dogs across all Breed A–Z pages. These routine but essential tasks form the backbone of our services and ensure accurate, timely support for the community.

Health Team Updates

We're very excited to announce that we have recently welcomed two new members to the team, Stephanie Goodacre, and Hayley Bray, who have joined us as Breeder Development Officers. Both Steff and Hayley have worked at the RKC for a number of years within the Assured Breeders Scheme and bring a huge wealth of experience to our team. We hope to be able to introduce you to our new team members during 2026.

Hayley Bray
Breeder Development Officer

Hannah James
Health and Genetics Information Advisor

Poppy Ryan
Health and Breeding Project Co-Ordinator

Alison Skipper
Veterinary and Research Advisor

Charlotte McNamara
Head of Health and Breeding

Fern McDonnell
Health and Breeding Manager

Eloise Bendelow
Health and Breeding Information Assistant

Joanna Ilska
RKC Geneticist

Stephanie Goodacre
Breeder Development Assessor

What's round the corner for 2026

- A New Future for Dog Breeding stakeholder report publication
- Nose-to-tail veterinary assessment & conformation project
- Health Standard update
- Health Standard campaign for novice breeders
- Health Standard severity index development
- Health collaboration days
- Patellar luxation scheme scope and feasibility study
- Respiratory Function Grading scheme expansion and scientific paper publication

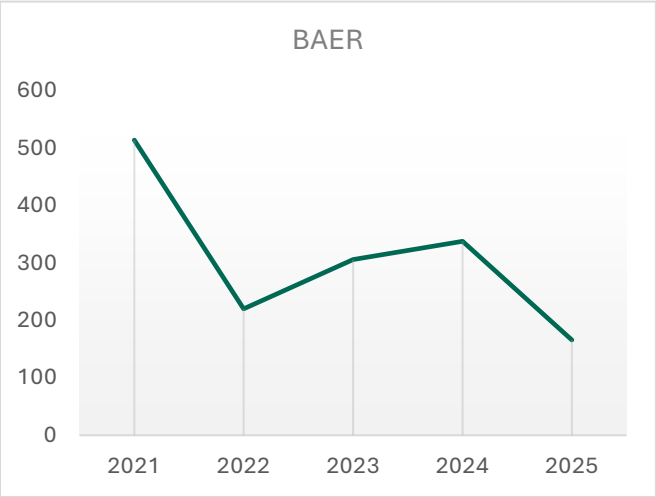
Thank you!

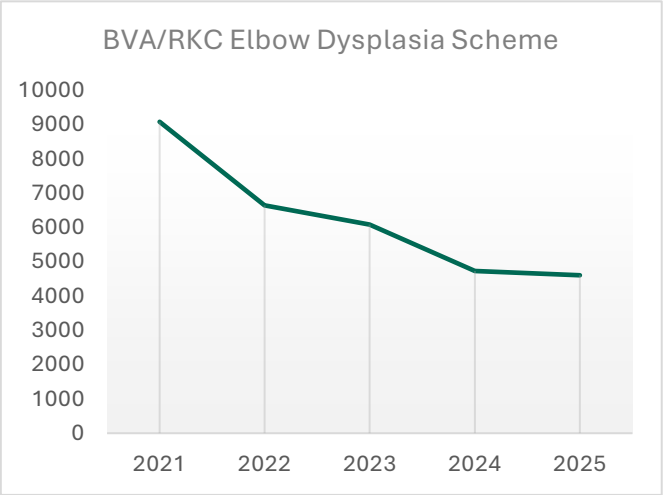
As always, we are genuinely grateful for all of your support and the work that you do, we appreciate you work as volunteers and have to juggle your role amongst a number of other commitments but are so pleased to have such a knowledgeable partnership to support us. This year has seen a number of huge changes to the RKC and we are excited to continue on this path with you into 2026 and beyond.

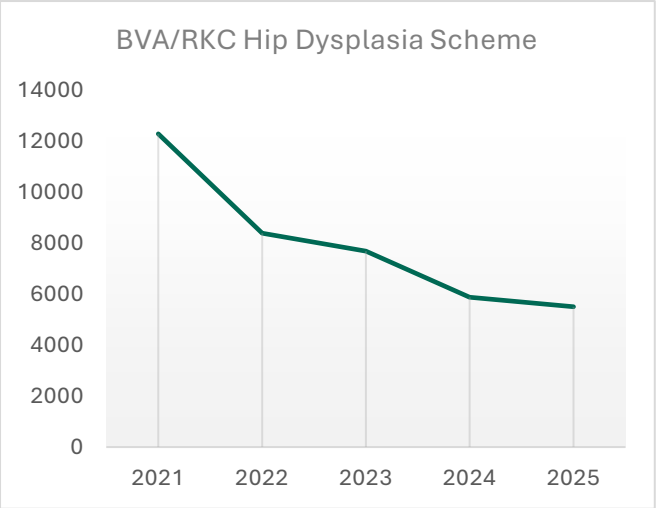
We wish you all happy holidays and look forward to working with you again in the new year.

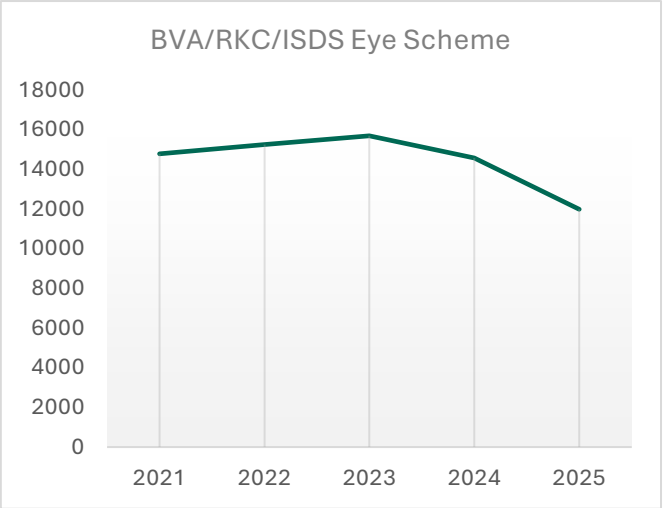
Appendix

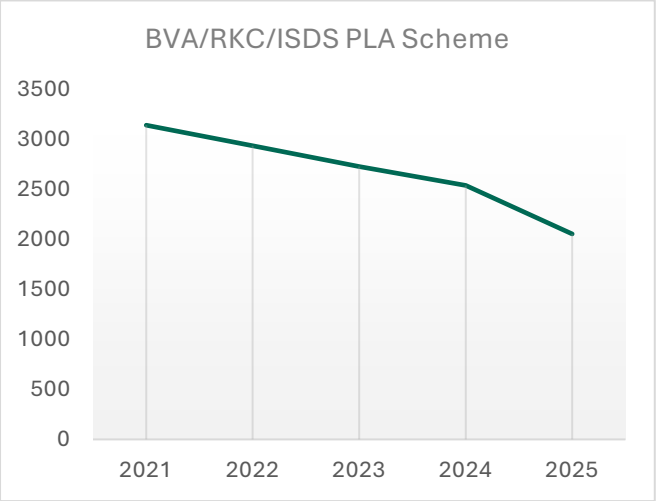
Health scheme performance

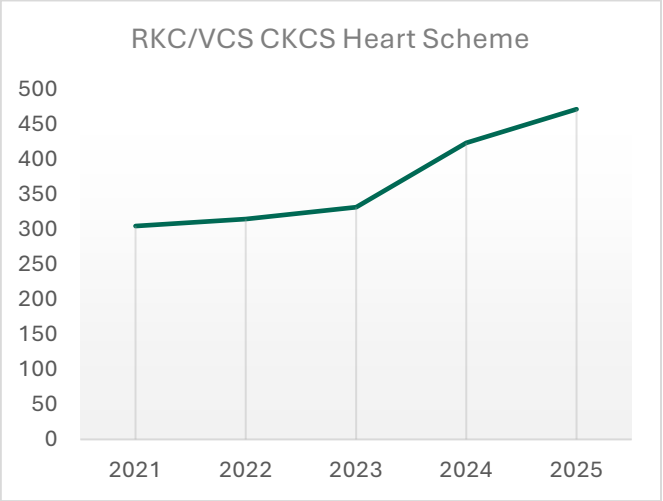


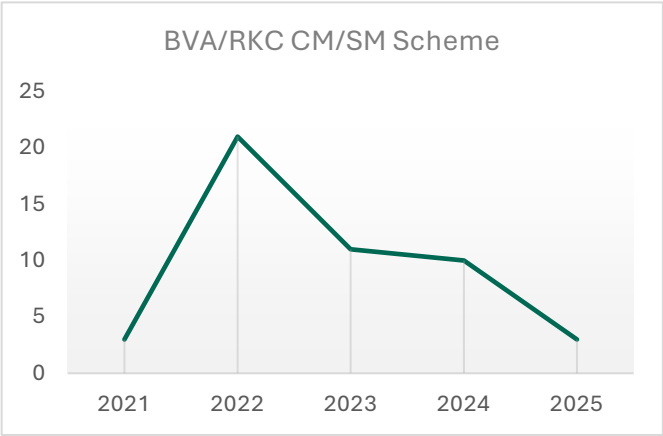


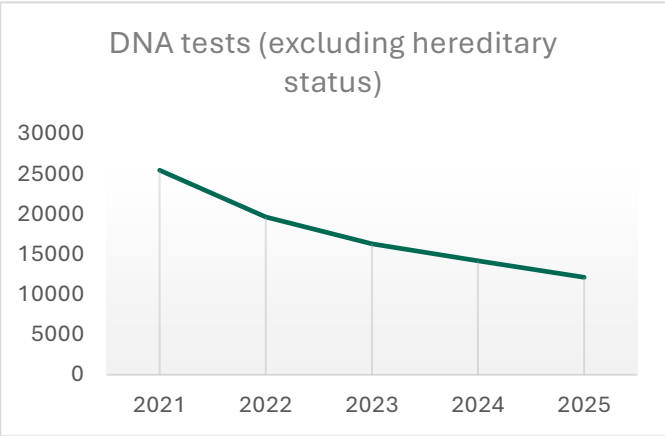


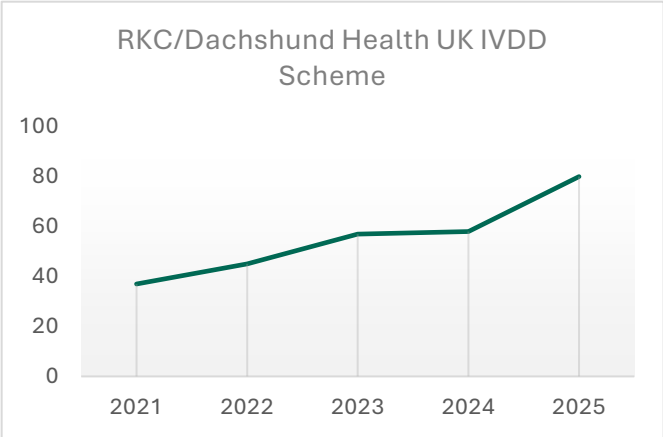


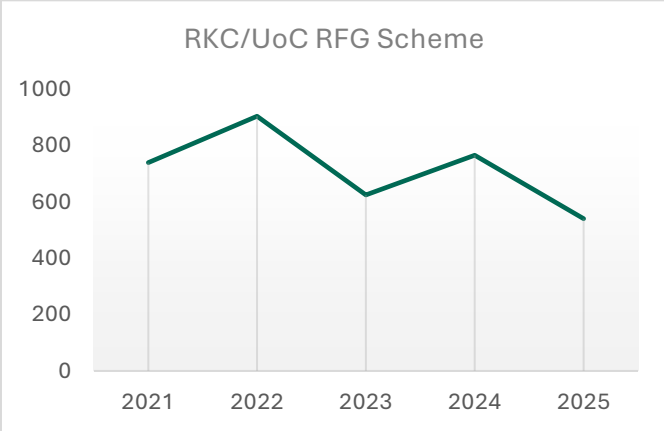


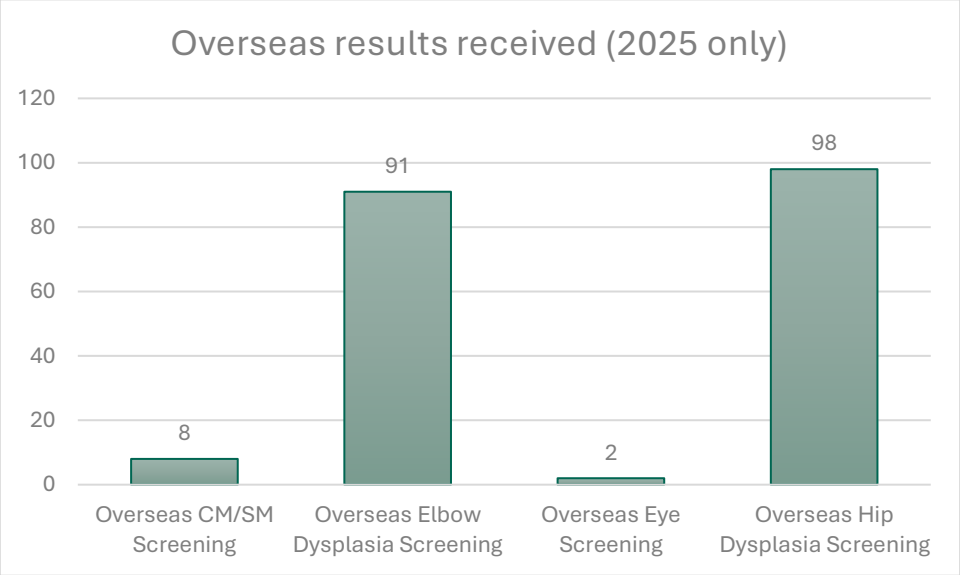



BVA/RKC CM/SM Scheme
25
20
15
10
5
0
2021
2022
2023
2024
2025


DNA tests (excluding hereditary status)
30000
25000
20000
15000
10000
5000
0
2021
2022
2023
2024
2025


RKC/Dachshund Health UK IVDD Scheme
100
80
60
40
20
0
2021
2022
2023
2024
2025


RKC/UoC RFG Scheme
1000
800
600
400
200
0
2021
2022
2023
2024
2025


Overseas results received (2025 only)
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
8
91
2
98
Overseas CM/SM Screening
Overseas Elbow Dysplasia Screening
Overseas Eye Screening
Overseas Hip Dysplasia Screening

Health Standard dashboard

Please note the below table includes all breeds, including those without any health tests under the Health Standard at this time, these are denoted by "na" under "% not health tested". Breeds are ranked alphabetically.

All breeds' testing status for litters registered Jan-Jul 2025.

Breed	Best Practice		Good Practice		% not health tested	No. of litters reg
	% met	No. of tests in category	% met	No. of tests in category		
Affenpinscher		-		-	na	**25**
Afghan Hound	66.7%	-		1	33.3%	**41**
Airedale Terrier	1.3%	-		2	98.7%	**45**
Akita	4.0%	-		2	96.0%	**68**
Alaskan Malamute		1	36.0%	4	64.0%	**40**
Anatolian Shepherd Dog		-		1	100.0%	**3**
Australian Cattle Dog	27.3%	-		5	72.7%	**44**
Australian Shepherd	2.3%	1	13.6%	6	84.1%	**153**
Australian Silky Terrier		-		-	na	**4**
Australian Terrier		-		-	na	**10**
Azawakh		-		-	na	**4**
Barbet (Imp)	33.3%	-		3	66.7%	**12**
Basenji	16.7%	-		1	83.3%	**32**
Basset Bleu de Gascogne		-		-	na	**18**
Basset Fauve De Bretagne	33.3%			1	66.7%	**33**
Basset Griffon Vendeen (Grand)		-		-	na	**9**
Basset Griffon Vendeen (Petit)		2	12.5%		87.5%	**16**
Basset Hound		2		3	100.0%	**72**
Bavarian Mountain Hound	12.5%	-		1	87.5%	**11**
Beagle	11.0%	2	51.6%	3	37.5%	**154**
Basset Bleu de Gascogne		-		-	na	**18**
Bearded Collie	4.7%	-		3	95.3%	**42**
Beauceron	50.0%	-		1	50.0%	**24**
Bedlington Terrier	15.7%	1	44.6%	1	39.8%	**37**
Belgian Shepherd Dog (Groenendael)		-		3	100.0%	**29**
Belgian Shepherd Dog (Laekenois)		-		3		**4**
Belgian Shepherd Dog (Malinois)	6.1%	-		3	93.9%	**107**
Belgian Shepherd Dog (Tervueren)		-		3	100.0%	**32**
Bergamasco (Imp)		-		-	na	**8**
Bernese Mountain Dog		2	34.7%		65.3%	**209**
Bichon Frise		1	43.2%		56.8%	**51**
Black & Tan Coonhound		2		1	100.0%	**4**
Bloodhound		2		1	100.0%	**4**

Bolognese	27.3%	-		1	72.7%	**13**
Breed	Best Practice		Good Practice		% not health tested	No. of litters reg
	% met	No. of tests in category	% met	No. of tests in category		
Border Collie		2	11.1%	11	88.9%	**668**
Border Terrier	51.6%	1			48.4%	**435**
Borzoi		-		-	na	**52**
Boston Terrier	5.6%	1	0.4%	1	93.9%	**124**
Bouvier Des Flandres		-		3	100.0%	**12**
Boxer		-		3	100.0%	**233**
Bracco Italiano	35.3%	-		2	64.7%	**45**
Braque D'Auvergne	100.0%	-		1		**4**
Briard	12.5%	-		3	87.5%	**18**
Brittany	66.7%	-		1	33.3%	**6**
Bull Terrier		-		1	100.0%	**142**
Bull Terrier (Miniature)		-		2	100.0%	**100**
Bulldog		2	0.4%	3	99.6%	**421**
Bullmastiff		3			100.0%	**55**
Cairn Terrier	30.6%	-		1	69.4%	**83**
Canaan Dog		-		2		**0**
Canadian Eskimo Dog		-		1	100.0%	**1**
Catalan Sheepdog		-		2	100.0%	**25**
Cavalier King Charles Spaniel	16.8%	3	2.0%	2	81.2%	**617**
Cesky Terrier		-		1		**5**
Chihuahua (Long Coat)		-		1	100.0%	**269**
Chihuahua (Smooth Coat)		-		1	99.7%	**223**
Chinese Crested	14.7%	-		2	85.3%	**78**
Chow Chow		3			100.0%	**164**
Cirneco Dell'Etna		-		-	na	**9**
Collie (Rough)		1	3.4%	5	96.6%	**102**
Collie (Smooth)		-		6	100.0%	**15**
Coton De Tulear		-		1	91.7%	**30**
Dachshund (Long Haired)		1		1	100.0%	**43**
Dachshund (Miniature Long Haired)		1		2	99.8%	**549**
Dachshund (Miniature Smooth Haired)	0.1%	1	0.4%	2	99.6%	**1268**
Dachshund (Miniature Wire Haired)	1.9%	2	4.7%	2	93.4%	**144**
Dachshund (Smooth Haired)		1		1	100.0%	**75**
Dachshund (Wire Haired)	0.5%	1	1.0%	1	98.5%	**151**
Dalmatian		-		4	99.3%	**85**
Dandie Dinmont Terrier		2	3.8%		96.2%	**25**
Deerhound		-		-	na	**24**
Dobermann	8.8%	1	25.8%	3	65.4%	**162**
Dogue de Bordeaux		3			100.0%	**50**
English Setter		1		4	100.0%	**54**

English Toy Terrier (Black & Tan)		-		1	100.0%	**37**
Breed	Best Practice		Good Practice		% not health tested	No. of litters reg
	% met	No. of tests in category	% met	No. of tests in category		
Entlebucher Mountain Dog (Imp)	50.0%	-		2	50.0%	**14**
Estrela Mountain Dog		-	50.0%		50.0%	**14**
Eurasier	7.7%	-		3	92.3%	**30**
Finnish Lapphund		2	50.0%	4	50.0%	**33**
Finnish Spitz		-		-	na	**9**
Fox Terrier (Smooth)		-		1	100.0%	**63**
Fox Terrier (Wire)	1.8%	-		1	98.2%	**93**
Foxhound		-		-	na	**21**
French Bulldog		1	3.3%	4	96.7%	**1178**
German Longhaired Pointer		-		2	100.0%	**6**
German Pinscher		-		-	na	**0**
German Shepherd Dog	1.5%	2	18.2%	2	80.4%	**701**
German Shorthaired Pointer	0.5%	-		3	99.5%	**87**
German Spitz (Klein)	38.9%	-		1	61.1%	**28**
German Spitz (Mittel)	78.9%	-		1	21.1%	**29**
German Wirehaired Pointer		-		4	100.0%	**47**
Giant Schnauzer		3	20.0%	4	80.0%	**58**
Glen Of Imaal Terrier	18.8%	-		2	81.3%	**10**
Gordon Setter		2	79.3%	2	20.7%	**23**
Grand Bleu de Gascogne		-		-	na	**0**
Great Dane		-		4	100.0%	**110**
Great Swiss Mountain Dog	33.3%	-		2	66.7%	**13**
Greenland Dog		-		1		**0**
Greyhound		-		1	100.0%	**39**
Griffon Bruxellois	1.9%	-		1	98.1%	**76**
Griffon Fauve De Bretagne		-		-	na	**0**
Hamiltonstovare		-		-	na	**0**
Harrier		-		-	na	**7**
Havanese		1	53.1%	1	46.9%	**109**
Hovawart	100.0%	-		1	0.0%	**9**
Hungarian Kuvasz		-		-	na	**0**
Hungarian Mudi		-		-	na	**11**
Hungarian Puli	40.0%	-		2	60.0%	**18**
Hungarian Pumi		2			100.0%	**16**
Hungarian Vizsla		4	10.7%		89.3%	**211**
Hungarian Wire Haired Vizsla	9.1%	2		2	90.9%	**45**
Ibizan Hound		-		-	na	**16**
Icelandic Sheepdog		-		-	na	**34**
Irish Red & White Setter	66.7%	-		3	33.3%	**18**
Irish Setter		1	65.3%	5	34.7%	**89**
Irish Terrier	16.4%	-		1	83.6%	**54**

Breed	Best Practice		Good Practice		% not health tested	No. of litters reg
	% met	No. of tests in category	% met	No. of tests in category		
Irish Wolfhound	10.3%	-		1	89.7%	**86**
Italian Greyhound		-		1	100.0%	**131**
Italian Spinone		2		2	100.0%	**26**
Jack Russell Terrier	6.8%	1	25.0%	3	68.2%	**183**
Japanese Akita Inu		-		3	100.0%	**34**
Japanese Chin		-		1	100.0%	**45**
Japanese Shiba Inu		2	14.2%	1	85.8%	**109**
Japanese Spitz		-		-	na	**27**
Keeshond	6.7%	2	20.0%	1	73.3%	**17**
Kerry Blue Terrier		-		-	na	**33**
King Charles Spaniel		-		1	100.0%	**26**
Komondor		-		-	na	**1**
Kooikerhondje		-		2	100.0%	**26**
Korean Jindo (Imp)		-		-	na	**1**
Korthals Griffon (Imp)	75.0%	-		2	25.0%	**4**
Lagotto Romagnolo	17.1%	2	12.2%	3	70.7%	**83**
Lakeland Terrier		-		1	100.0%	**24**
Lancashire Heeler		1	26.7%	2	73.3%	**30**
Large Munsterlander	41.7%	2	41.7%	2	16.7%	**10**
Leonberger		4	37.5%	4	62.5%	**47**
Lhasa Apso	4.6%	1	48.9%	1	46.6%	**79**
Lowchen (Little Lion Dog)		-		-	na	**10**
Maltese		-		1	100.0%	**167**
Manchester Terrier		-		2	100.0%	**15**
Maremma Sheepdog	50.0%	-		1	50.0%	**10**
Mastiff		2	4.5%	2	95.5%	**55**
Miniature Pinscher		-		1	100.0%	**35**
Miniature Schnauzer	48.7%	-		2	51.3%	**396**
Neapolitan Mastiff		2		1	100.0%	**22**
Newfoundland		3	28.2%	1	71.8%	**98**
Norfolk Terrier		-		-	na	**92**
Norwegian Buhund	100.0%	-		3		**0**
Norwegian Elkhound	25.0%	2	62.5%	3	12.5%	**19**
Norwich Terrier		-		-	na	**22**
Old English Sheepdog	10.6%	3	4.3%	1	85.1%	**33**
Otterhound		2	66.7%	1	33.3%	**10**
Papillon	1.2%	2	68.3%	3	30.5%	**105**
Parson Russell Terrier	16.9%	2	42.7%	2	40.4%	**55**
Pekingese		-		1	100.0%	**47**
Pharaoh Hound		-		-	na	**17**
Picardy Sheepdog		-		3	100.0%	**7**
Pointer	1.6%	-		1	98.4%	**63**
Polish Hunting Dog		-		-	na	**13**

Polish Lowland Sheepdog	33.3%	-		2	66.7%	**10**

Breed	Best Practice		Good Practice		% not health tested	No. of litters reg
	% met	No. of tests in category	% met	No. of tests in category		
Pomeranian		-		1	100.0%	**475**
Poodle (Miniature)		-		4	100.0%	**236**
Poodle (Standard)	12.4%	-		5	87.6%	**135**
Poodle (Toy)		1	31.7%	2	68.3%	**393**
Portuguese Podengo		-		-	na	**28**
Portuguese Pointer		-		-	na	**0**
Portuguese Water Dog	4.5%	1	40.9%	4	54.5%	**41**
Pug		2	0.3%	2	99.7%	**164**
Pyrenean Mastiff		-		-	na	**8**
Pyrenean Mountain Dog		-		3	100.0%	**20**
Pyrenean Sheepdog (Long Haired)		-		-	na	**0**
Pyrenean Sheepdog (Smooth Faced)		-		-	na	**0**
Retriever (Chesapeake Bay)	42.9%	3	28.6%	2	28.6%	**13**
Retriever (Curly Coated)				3	100.0%	**17**
Retriever (Flat Coated)	11.0%	2	32.3%	2	56.7%	**135**
Retriever (Golden)	10.7%	5	5.9%	2	83.4%	**1097**
Retriever (Labrador)	6.4%	9	1.5%	1	92.0%	**2882**
Retriever (Nova Scotia Duck Tolling)		3	9.0%	5	91.0%	**68**
Rhodesian Ridgeback	0.8%	3	27.7%	1	71.4%	**115**
Rottweiler	1.5%	3	16.8%	1	81.7%	**296**
Russian Black Terrier		2	33.3%	3	66.7%	**47**
Russian Toy (Imp)	30.8%	-		1	69.2%	**37**
Saluki		-		1	100.0%	**29**
Samoyed		-		5	100.0%	**69**
Schipperke		-		2	100.0%	**8**
Schnauzer	3.8%	-		2	96.2%	**28**
Scottish Terrier		-		-	na	**82**
Sealyham Terrier	6.9%	1	44.8%	1	48.3%	**44**
Shar Pei		1	2.8%	3	97.2%	**37**
Shetland Sheepdog		1	3.8%	7	96.2%	**236**
Shih Tzu		1			100.0%	**242**
Siberian Husky	64.3%	-		3	35.7%	**111**
Skye Terrier		-		-	na	**17**
Sloughi		-		-	na	**1**
Slovakian Rough Haired Pointer		-		-	na	**9**
Small Munsterlander (Imp)		-		-	na	**15**
Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier	20.0%	-		1	80.0%	**26**
Spaniel (American Cocker)		2	37.1%	2	62.9%	**48**
Spaniel (American Water)		-		-	na	**0**
Spaniel (Clumber)	9.8%	2	26.8%	3	63.4%	**21**

Spaniel (Cocker)	0.9%	2	26.7%	4	72.4%	**2553**
Breed	Best Practice		Good Practice		% not health tested	No. of litters reg
	% met	No. of tests in category	% met	No. of tests in category		
Spaniel (English Springer)	0.2%	4	0.6%	5	99.2%	**591**
Spaniel (Field)	33.3%	-		3	66.7%	**12**
Spaniel (Irish Water)		-	90.0%	3	10.0%	**16**
Spaniel (Sussex)		-		2	100.0%	**11**
Spaniel (Welsh Springer)	78.7%	2	4.3%	1	17.0%	**37**
Spanish Water Dog	21.9%	2		4	78.1%	**31**
St. Bernard		3			100.0%	**83**
Staffordshire Bull Terrier		-		5	100.0%	**809**
Swedish Lapphund		-		-	na	**0**
Swedish Vallhund	57.1%	-		3	42.9%	**21**
Tibetan Mastiff		2			100.0%	**15**
Tibetan Spaniel	70.3%	-		2	29.7%	**66**
Tibetan Terrier	30.0%	3	38.0%	4	32.0%	**102**
Turkish Kangal Dog		-		-	na	**0**
Weimaraner		-		2	100.0%	**84**
Welsh Corgi (Cardigan)		-		3	100.0%	**44**
Welsh Corgi (Pembroke)	1.0%	-		1	96.6%	**165**
Welsh Terrier		1	39.4%		60.6%	**39**
West Highland White Terrier		-		-	na	**205**
Whippet		-		-	na	**358**
White Swiss Shepherd Dog (Imp)		2	37.5%		62.5%	**38**
Xoloitzcuintle (Mex Hairless) Int (Imp)		-		-	na	**5**
Xoloitzcuintle (Mex Hairless) Min (Imp)		-		-	na	**16**
Xoloitzcuintle (Mex Hairless) Std (Imp)		-		-	na	**21**
Yorkshire Terrier		-		-	na	**130**

Heart survey

In collaboration with the VCS, the RKC's Health Team conducted an online heart survey to improve our understanding of the prevalence and types of heart disease across all dog breeds. The survey aimed to identify breed-specific nuances and better inform the need for screening initiatives.

The survey ran from April 2024 to April 2025 and was open to all dog owners of all breeds. In total, the survey received 6,294 responses from owners of both living and deceased dogs.

Top Reported Heart Conditions

The total number of individual heart conditions reported was 974.

The most reported heart conditions were murmur (unspecified) (31%), mitral valve disease (MVD), (19%), dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) (11%), and heart failure (11%).

Table 1: Top heart conditions reported in the survey

Heart condition	Count	Percentage
Murmur (unspecified)	296	30.5%
Mitral valve disease (MVD)	181	18.6%
Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM)	108	11.1%
Heart failure	107	11.0%
Total	974	

Prevalence

940 of 6,294 dogs (14.9%) had a diagnosed heart condition.

The top 10 breeds with the highest prevalence of heart disease are shown in Table 2 (only those with at least 10 individual dogs included in the survey).

Table 2: Breeds with highest prevalence of heart disease

Breed	No. of affected dogs	Total dogs	Prevalence
Deerhound	7	10	70.0%
Basset Fauve de Bretagne	10	15	66.7%
Lancashire Heeler	8	15	53.3%
Cavalier King Charles Spaniel	131	282	46.5%
Yorkshire Terrier	4	10	40.0%
Irish Wolfhound	37	96	38.5%
Chihuahua (Long Coat)	7	19	36.8%
Bichon Frise	4	11	36.4%
Cairn Terrier	10	30	33.3%
Bull Terrier	23	70	32.9%

<u>Heart murmur</u>

- A total of **296** dogs were reported to have a heart murmur.
- The top five breeds affected were the **Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Spaniel (Cocker), Whippet, Retriever (Labrador),** and **Hungarian Vizsla**.
- The **median age at onset** was **6 years** (ranging from birth to 15 years).
- Most affected dogs were male (**52% male vs 48% female**) and neutered (**28% entire vs 72% neutered**).
- **39% of dogs received treatment**. Of those with outcome data, **79% showed improvement**.
- Among the 93 deceased dogs, **51% of owners believed their dog's death was related to the heart murmur**.

<u>Mitral valve disease (MVD)</u>

- A total of **181** dogs were reported to have MVD.
- The top five breeds affected were the **Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Whippet, Spaniel (Cocker), Bull Terrier,** and **Retriever (Labrador).**

- The **median age at onset** was **8 years** (ranging from 3 months to 13 years and 9 months).
- **50% were male and 50% were female**
- Most affected dogs were neutered (**28% entire vs 72% neutered**).
- **68% of dogs received treatment**. Of those with outcome data, **72% showed improvement**.
- Among the 68 deceased dogs, **74% of owners believed their dog's death was related to MVD**.

Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM)

- A total of **108** dogs were reported to have DCM.
- The top five breeds affected were the **Dobermann, Whippet, Irish Wolfhound, Newfoundland,** and **Deerhound**.
- The **median age at onset** was **6 years and 9 months** (ranging from 2 months to 14 years and 10 months).
- Most affected dogs were male (**73% male vs 27% female**) and neutered (**44% entire vs 56% neutered**).
- **89% of dogs received treatment**. Of those with outcome data, **60% showed improvement**.
- Among the 72 deceased dogs, **81% of owners believed their dog's death was related to DCM**.

Heart failure

- A total of **107** dogs were reported to have heart failure.
- The top four breeds affected were the **Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Border Collie, Spaniel (Cocker),** and **Japanese Chin**.
- The **median age at onset** was **10 years and 2 months** (ranging from 3 months to over 15 years).
- **50% were male and 50% were female**.
- Most affected dogs were neutered (**32% entire vs 68% neutered**).
- **81% of dogs received treatment**. Of those with outcome data, **65% showed improvement**.
- Among the 71 deceased dogs, **93% of owners believed their dog's death was related to heart failure**.

Statistically significant findings:

- The results found that affected dogs were significantly more likely to be non-KC registered than unaffected dogs ($p<0.001$, OR = 4.09, CI: 3.3-5.0).
- While there was no significant difference in heart condition prevalence between male and female dogs, neutered dogs were significantly more likely to be affected than entire dogs ($p<0.001$, OR = 2.18, CI: 1.88-2.51).