

## **Effect of dog ownership experience on the uptake of preventative health care practices reported by puppy owners**

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### **Objectives**

To summarise preventative health care practices reported by owners of puppies aged <16 weeks, and to determine whether previous dog ownership affected engagement in preventative health care.

### **Methods**

Owners who acquired a single puppy at <11.5 weeks of age and lived in the UK or Republic of Ireland were recruited onto a longitudinal cohort study. Online questionnaires were completed at study registration and when puppies were aged 16 weeks. Chi-squared tests were used to examine associations between previous dog ownership and the use of flea and worm treatment/preventative products, vaccinations and pet insurance, on puppies at or before 16 weeks of age.

### **Results**

Of 1,288 owners, 1,118 (87%) and 1,230 (95%) reported that by 16 weeks of age their puppies had been administered at least one flea product and at least one worming product, respectively; 1,259 (98%) of puppies had been vaccinated at least once and 1,066 (83%) were insured by 16 weeks. First-time puppy owners were more likely than owners with previous dog ownership experience to use a flea product (OR: 2.63; 95%CI: 1.66-4.16: P<0.001) and have pet insurance (OR: 1.92; 95%CI: 1.33-2.79: P<0.001) by 16 weeks of age, respectively. No differences were found for the use of worming products (P=0.3) nor vaccinations by 16 weeks of age (P=0.2).

### **Statement**

Flea product use and pet insurance acquisition were less commonly reported than worming product use and vaccination amongst our cohort subjects. Factors, including previous dog ownership, may influence uptake of preventative health care, suggesting advice could be tailored to different audiences.