

Puppy acquisition behaviour - preliminary data from the 'Generation Pup' birth cohort



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Background:



In the UK, it is advised that owners looking to acquire puppies should view puppies with their mother and that puppies should not leave their mother until 8 weeks of age (Dogs Trust, 2018). Anecdotal reports suggest that many owners do not follow this advice.

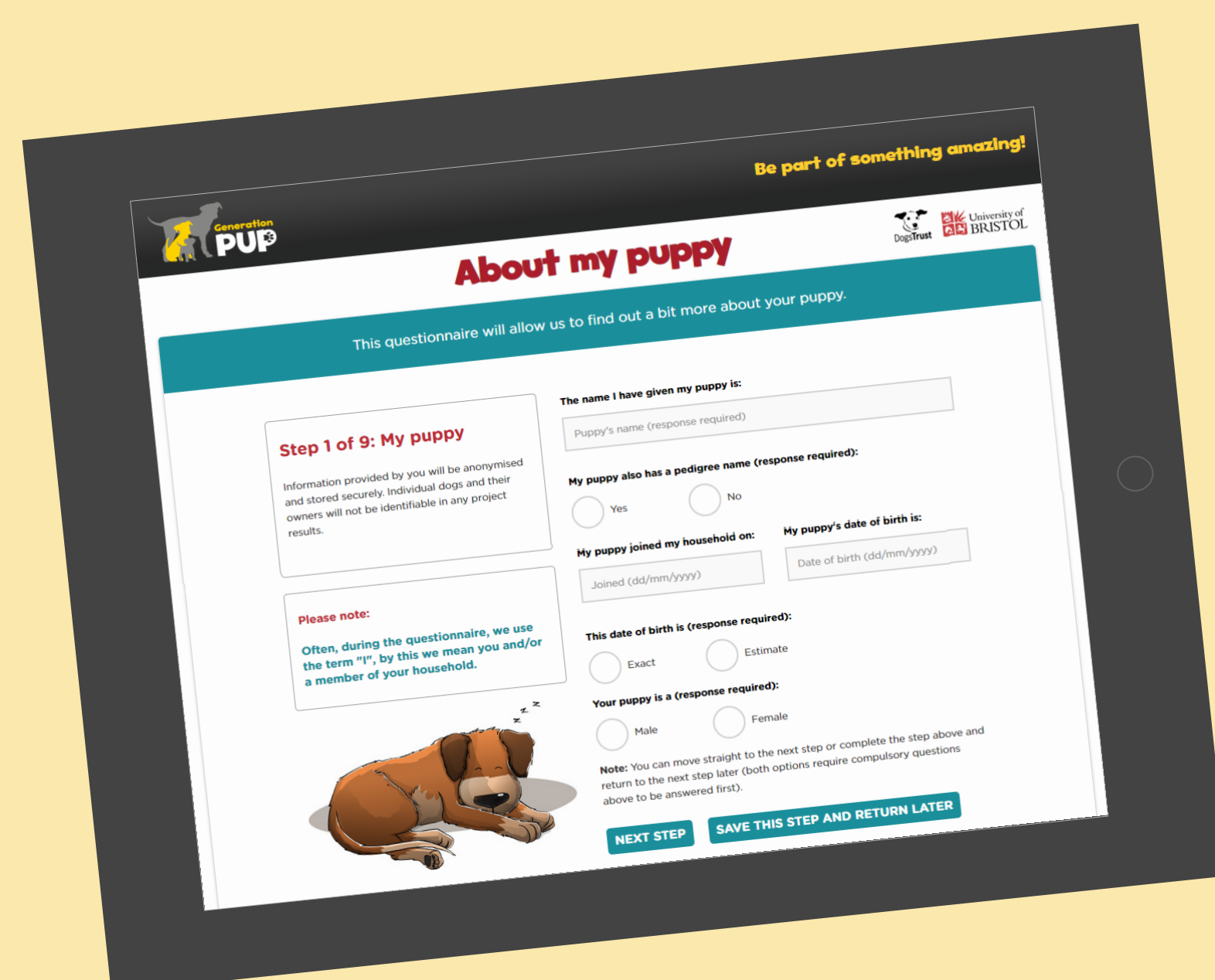


Methodology:

Owner-completed questionnaire data were available for the first puppies (any breed or cross-breed, aged <16 weeks & living in the UK or Republic of Ireland) who had been registered with the Generation Pup longitudinal study (n=2,013).

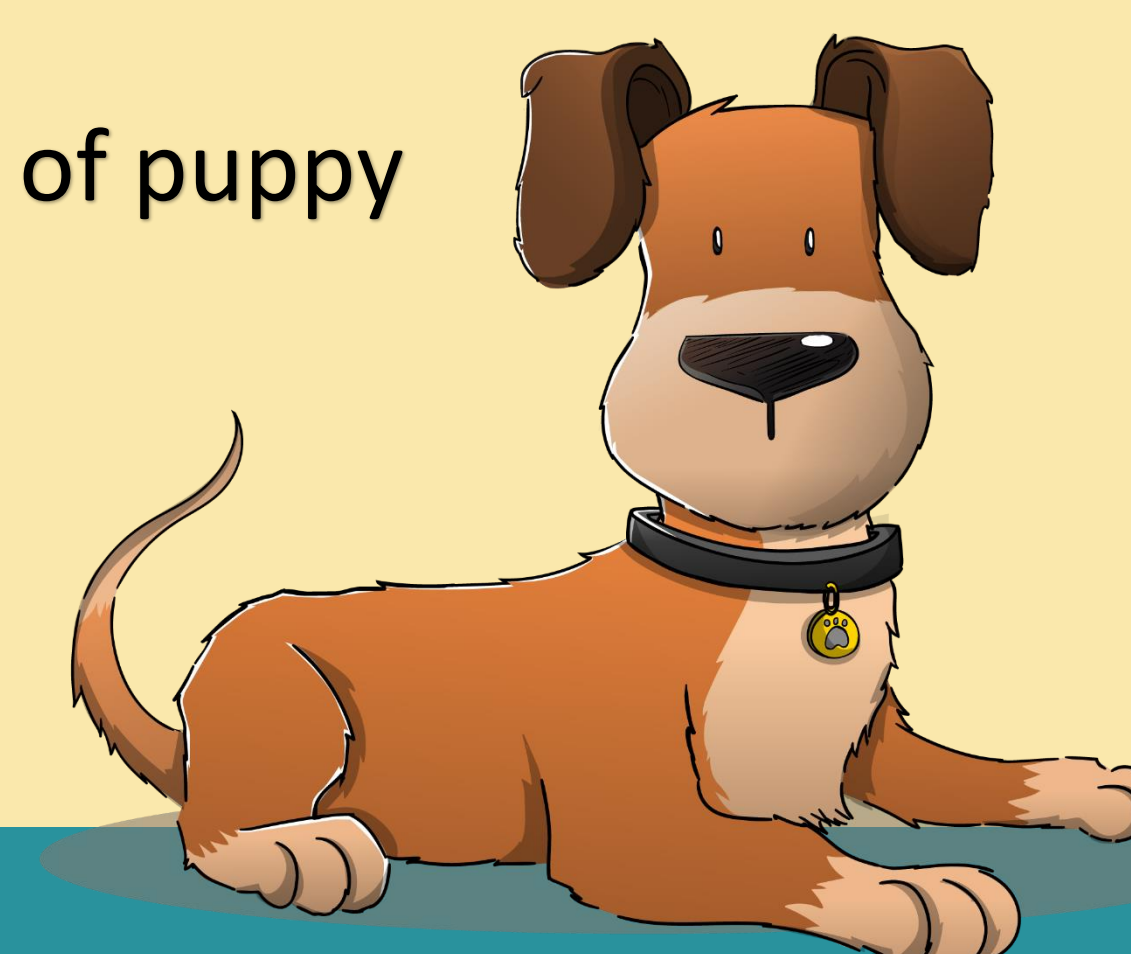
Excluded from analysis were:

- 62 puppies registered with owners with >1 study dog (54 owners had 2 registered dogs, 4 owners had 3 registered dogs)
- 79 puppies bred by the owner
- 93 puppies acquired from rehoming centres
- 106 puppies where their source could not be confirmed as: 'Kennel Club Assured Breeder (KCAB)'/ 'Professional breeder' versus (vs.) 'Hobby or occasional breeder'



Statistical significance was set at $P < 0.05$ for Chi-squared tests that were used to test for association between source of puppy ('KCAB'/'Professional breeder' vs. 'Hobby or occasional breeder') and two outcomes of interest:

- Puppy acquired before 8 weeks of age (y/n)
- Puppy acquired without seeing the puppy with its mother (y/n)



Results:

Despite recommendations to the contrary, approximately **26%** (435/1,645) of puppies were acquired before 8 weeks of age, **7%** (114/1,645) were not viewed with their mothers, and **1%** (24/1,645) had been acquired before 8 weeks of age AND without seeing the mother.

Within our cohort, there was no evidence of significant association between source of puppy and our two outcomes of interest: age at acquisition (i)/ viewed with mother (ii), or between the two outcomes of interest (iii):

i) Age at acquisition (<8 wks/≥8 wks), (P=0.58)

ii) Viewed with mother (yes/no), (P=0.34)

iii) Acquired <8wks & viewed without mother, (P=0.18)

	Acquired <8 weeks of age	Acquired ≥8 weeks of age
Source: KCABS/ Professional breeder	202 (25.9%)	579 (74.1%)
Hobby or occasional breeder	233 (27.0%)	631 (73.0%)

	Puppy viewed without mother	Puppy viewed with mother
Source: KCABS/ Professional breeder	59 (7.6%)	722 (92.4%)
Hobby or occasional breeder	55 (6.4%)	809 (93.6%)

	Acquired <8 weeks of age	Acquired ≥8 weeks of age
Puppy viewed without mother	24 (5.5%)	90 (7.4%)
Puppy viewed with mother	411 (94.5%)	1,120 (92.6%)

Conclusions:

Despite recommendations, advice regarding minimum acquisition age was not followed by 26% of this cohort, and 7% had not viewed their puppy with its mother. Future research within the Generation Pup longitudinal study will investigate the influence acquisition age has on various health/behaviour outcomes, with the potential to provide evidence for puppy purchasing recommendations regarding minimum age at acquisition.

References: Dogs Trust (2018) <https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/factsheets-downloads/getting%20a%20puppy.pdf>

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