

# Current VetCompass understanding on canine health

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Figure 1: Toby and puppy (Labradoodles). Credit: Kim Cawley

The VetCompass project is a joint initiative involving the Royal Veterinary College, the University of Sydney and a growing number of general veterinary practices in the UK and more recently Australia. VetCompass uses clinical information shared from veterinary practices to examine health issues in dogs. Current hot topics in canine health include whether crossbred dogs are healthier than purebred dogs and which breeds are the healthiest. VetCompass studies show that these questions do not have simple answers.

Regarding crossbred and purebred [dogs](#), VetCompass studies show, on the one hand, that crossbreds live 1.2 years longer than purebreds (O'Neill et al 2013) but, on the other hand, crossbred dogs have lower occurrences for only three from the top 20 disorders recorded in dogs (O'Neill et al 2014). Crossbred dogs do appear to benefit from a hybrid vigour effect for general characteristics such as longevity but seem to enjoy less advantage when it comes to specific common disorders.



Figure 2: Bella (Working Cocker Spaniel). Credit: Pippa Powell

On the question of the healthiest breeds, the lifespan of breeds varies widely, from 5.5 years in the Dogue de Bordeaux up to 14.2 years in the Miniature Poodle (O'Neill et al 2013). However, across many common and important disorders, breeds at high risk for one disorder are often at lower risk for another disorder (Kearsley-Fleet et al 2013, Mattin et al 2014, O'Neill et al 2014, O'Neill et al 2013). So, although we now know which breeds live the longest and which breeds are most at risk for

specific disorders, we do not yet have an answer for which [breeds](#) are the healthiest overall. VetCompass work will continue to help answer these vexing questions.

**More information:** Kearsley-Fleet, L., O'Neill, D. G., Volk, H. A., Church, D. B. & Brodbelt, D. C. (2013) Prevalence and risk factors for canine epilepsy of unknown origin in the UK. *Veterinary Record* 172, 338. [DOI: 10.1136/vr.101133](https://doi.org/10.1136/vr.101133)

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O'Neill, D. G., Elliott, J., Church, D. B., McGreevy, P. D., Thomson, P. C. & Brodbelt, D. C. (2013b) Chronic kidney disease in dogs in UK veterinary practices: prevalence, risk factors, and survival. *Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine* 27, 814-821 [DOI: 10.1111/jvim.12090](https://doi.org/10.1111/jvim.12090)

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