

Poster topic 03

Poster 8

Dogslife: a web-based study of canine health

Pugh, C.A., Bronsvoort, B.M., Handel, I.G., Summers, K.M. and Clements, D.N., Roslin Institute & R(D) SVS, United Kingdom; Carys.Pugh@roslin.ed.ac.uk

Dogslife is a web-based, longitudinal study of the health of Labrador Retrievers. Participants are requested to complete an online questionnaire at defined intervals which captures phenotypic data and owner-reported information on the dog's environment, diet, exercise levels and health/illness. The platform is ideally suited to maintaining the cohort as participant retention is facilitated via automatic email reminders and ongoing costs can be minimised. Recruitment began in July 2010 and to date 2,170 dogs have been registered. The recruitment rate is 2.2% of the (available) Kennel Club registered Labrador Retriever population. Recruitment rate was highest for those directly targeted by email and/or postal advertising (5.9%). After 18 months 2.6% of the registered dogs were permanently lost to follow-up either due to re-homing (1.5%) or death (1.1%). Continuous evaluation indicates that the cohort is geographically representative of UK-based, Kennel Club-registered, Labrador Retrievers. Rarer coat colours are slightly over-represented and the owner cohort comprises fewer smokers than the wider UK population. In the first year of life, illness or clinical signs were reported for 86% of dogs and at 18 months into the project, over 2,700 illnesses or clinical signs had been recorded. Of these reported signs, 1,510 were not associated with veterinary visits and would therefore not be detected in more traditional studies of canine health based on veterinary presentations. Current work includes validation of the data collected. Veterinary records are being requested for a random cohort sub-sample to verify illness reports. Random visits will also be undertaken to verify owners' measurement of height and weight and assess the ongoing validity of the questionnaire. Once validated, the breadth of illness data captured by Dogslife will offer a unique opportunity to seek relationships between the environment, early minor illness and subsequent ill health in a companion canine population.