



## Royal Adelaide Show 2011 Research: Dog Breeders

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details key findings from research analysis undertaken by the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute (the Institute), University of South Australia, on behalf of the Dog and Cat Management Board (the Board).

The aim of the research was to gather information about dog breeders – the litters they produce, if they desex or microchip their litters before homing them, and what advice and information they give to the new owners.

The data was collected from breeders who attended the Dog & Cat Management Board stand within the dog exhibition pavilion at the Royal Adelaide Show in 2011. A total 255 breeders completed the survey.

When interpreting the findings of this report, it is important to note that this is **not** a randomly recruited sample of dog breeders. Dog breeders at the Royal Show are likely there to compete dogs or are interested in competing dogs, and therefore not the “average” breeder. From the data, all of the breeders that completed the survey were registered with a state controlling body and four in five had been breeding dogs for more than 10 years. This suggests the sample skews to highly experienced breeders. We therefore cannot say with certainty that the opinions of these breeders are fully representative of the entire population of dog breeders.

## Key findings: Breeders and litters

- Three in four breeders were members of Dogs SA. All remaining breeders were members of an interstate controlling body (of these, most were Victorians).
- Four in five breeders have been producing ANKC registered puppies for at least ten years; indicating our sample skews to highly experienced breeders.
- Seven in 10 breeders produce only one (47%) or two (23%) litters per year, while the average litter size was most commonly between four and seven (73%).
- Breeders claimed about two in three puppies were placed into new homes between eight and 10 weeks of age. Almost all puppies were homed before they were 12 weeks old.
- Almost nine in 10 breeders suggested particular puppies for particular homes, based on the personality of the puppies.

## Key findings: Desexing and microchipping

- It was much more common for puppies to be microchipped before they were homed than desexed – more than four in five puppies were microchipped but less than one in five puppies were desexed.
- However, many had some form of control in place to ensure that the owner desexed the dog. The most common form of proof of desexing required was a sterilisation certificate from a registered vet.
- The vast majority (85%) of breeders did recommend an age for puppies to be desexed to the new owners. Over six in 10 breeders recommended puppies desexed between six and 12 months of age.
- Of puppies that were microchipped, seven in 10 breeders put their contact details as the secondary contact on the microchip registry.

## Key findings: Information provided

- Virtually all (97%) breeders provide an information pack to go with their puppies.
- Slightly more than half of breeders include the Board’s materials with these information packs.

**Key findings: Recommendations for future research**

- Improvements to the survey instrument were noted, particularly in reference to desexing and microchipping questions.
- All questions should include a “Don’t know / Prefer not to say” option. If respondents are unsure of their answer or do not want to answer a question, they cloud the results when forced to make a choice.
- Overall, instructions throughout the survey could have been more explicit. Tell respondents how you want them to answer the question, i.e. either picking one or multiple options when it is not obvious. Guide respondents through the survey given their answers, e.g. if the answer to Q7 is “Yes”, have an instruction next to the response option “Please go to Q10”. This will produce “cleaner” data.

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# INTRODUCTION

This report details key findings from research analysis undertaken by the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute (the Institute), University of South Australia, on behalf of the Dog and Cat Management Board (the Board).

## Research objectives

The aim of the research was to gather information about dog breeders – the litters they produce, if they desex or microchip their litters before homing them, and what advice and information they give to the new owners.

## Data collection method

The data analysed in this report was collected through a self-completion survey with breeders that attended the Dog & Cat Management Board stand within the dog exhibition pavilion at the Royal Adelaide Show in 2011. A total 255 breeders completed the survey.

Volunteers from the Delta program and staff from the Board manned the stand and administered the survey to people in the immediate vicinity of the stand, as well as to those that approached the stand. Breeders that participated were given a “GoodDog” bag to compensate for their time and effort.

## Not a random sample

When interpreting the findings of this report, it is important to note that this is **not** a randomly recruited sample of dog breeders. Dog breeders at the Royal Show are likely there to compete dogs or are interested in competing dogs, and therefore not the “average” breeder. From the data, all of the breeders that completed the survey were registered with a state controlling body and four in five had been breeding dogs for more than 10 years. This suggests the sample skews to highly experienced breeders. We therefore cannot say with certainty that the opinions of these breeders are fully representative of the entire population of dog breeders.

## The analysis

Analysis was done using statistics package SPSS 18, with cross tabulations and analysis of variance (one way ANOVA) used to identify differences between groups. Differences were said to be significant if the probability of the results being due to sample variation, rather than true between group differences, was less than 5%. Where percentage columns in tables do not add to 100, this is a result of rounding. It is not uncommon for columns to sum to between 99 and 101.

## FINDINGS: BREEDERS AND LITTERS

### Membership with canine controlling bodies

Respondents were first asked to which state canine controlling body were they a member. All breeders claimed they were members of at least one state controlling body, some more than one.

Due to some breeders giving multiple responses, the percentages column refers to the percentage of respondents (from the total sample size) who identified membership with a particular body, rather than the percentage of responses (from the total number of responses). It is for this reason that the percentages columns do not sum to 100%. This is the case throughout the rest of this report when respondents gave multiple answers.

Table 1 shows the vast majority (76%) of respondents were members of Dogs SA. This is unsurprising given the research was conducted in South Australia. Of the remaining breeders, most were registered with Dogs Vic. Three breeders were registered in two states – each were members of both Dogs NSW and Dogs Queensland.

Table 1: Which state canine controlling body are you a member of?

	n	%*
Dogs SA	193	76
Dogs Vic	47	18
Dogs NSW	9	4
Dogs Queensland	5	2
Dogs West	4	2
Total	258	102

### Length of time breeding registered litters

Table 2 shows the vast majority (79%) of breeders in the survey had been producing ANKC registered puppies for ten or more years. All other lengths of time received very low numbers of responses.

Table 2: How long have you been producing ANKC registered puppies?

	n	%
1 year	8	3
2 years	12	5
3 years	7	3
4 years	1	<1
5 years	7	3
6 years	4	2
7 years	1	<1
8 years	3	1
9 years	11	4
10 or more years	200	79
Missing	1	<1
Total	255	100

## Number of litters bred per year

Table 3 shows it was most common for breeders to breed only one or two litters per year. Only 12% of the sample said they bred three or more litters per year.

Table 3: How many litters do you breed per year?

	n	%
1	121	48
2	60	24
3	10	4
4	6	2
5	7	3
8	4	2
10 or more	2	1
Missing	45	18
Total	255	101

Interestingly, almost one in five breeders did not answer the question. There are three possible reasons for this amount of missing data: 1) this is a contentious question that breeders did not want to answer the question, 2) they produce less than one litter and year, and so did not have a response option available, or 3) the number of litters is between years varies greatly, making this a difficult question to answer. In any future research, we recommend the Board: 1) include a “Don’t know / Prefer not to say” option, and 2) include a “Less than 1 litter per year” response option to better determine the reasons for not answering the question.

## Average litter size

Table 4 shows six puppies were the most common average litter size for almost one in three litters (32%). Generally litter sizes were most commonly between four and six, with 72% of breeders falling within this range.

Table 4: What is your average litter size?

	n	%
1	5	2
2	6	2
3	20	8
4	47	18
5	30	12
6	82	32
7	23	9
8	23	9
9	2	1
10 or more	7	3
Missing	10	4
Total	255	100

Again, a number of respondents did not answer this question so we would suggest including a “Don’t know / Prefer not to say” response in future research.

## Placing puppies in new homes

Table 5 shows most puppies were placed in new homes between eight and 10 weeks (64%). Almost all puppies (94%) were placed in homes before they were 12 weeks old.

Table 5: At what age do you place your puppies in new homes?

	n	%
8 – 10 weeks	164	64
11 – 12 weeks	75	29
3 – 6 months	16	6
6+ months	0	0
Total	255	99

Breeders were also asked if they suggest particular puppies for particular prospective owners based on the personality of the puppies. Table 6 shows the vast majority of breeders – almost nine in 10 – do indeed do this.

Table 6: Do you suggest particular puppies for particular homes, based on their personality?

	n	%
Yes	221	87
No	34	13
Total	255	100



# FINDINGS: DESEXING AND MICROCHIPPING

## Desexing before selling

Breeders were asked if they desex the puppies before homing them. Table 7 shows only a minority of breeders (16%) desex their puppies before they send them to their new homes.

Table 7: Do you desex your puppies before they go to their new home?

	n	%
Yes	41	16
No	214	84
Total	255	100

However, despite many breeders not desexing their puppies before they are homed, many of them place controls over the reproductive potential of their dogs after putting them into a new home. Breeders were provided a list of means to do this – shown in Table 8 – and asked which ones they used.

There were some issues with how respondents answered this question. Despite only 41 breeders claiming to desex their puppies in the previous question (Q7), 47 breeders claimed they sold their puppies desexed in Q8. Looking at the responses of only the breeders that claimed they did not desex puppies before homing them, 15 of them still claimed they sold their puppies desexed in Q8. This is not a great cause for concern, but clearly shows the potential for respondent inaccuracy.

Some respondents selected multiple options without being prompted to do so, although some breeders may indeed use multiple methods across litters or dependent on what the owner wants. In future years, we would suggest using a skip instruction or gathering this information in a single question so as not to confuse respondents and receive mixed results such as this.

Nevertheless, the results in Table 8 indicate the most common means to control the reproductive potential of dogs was a contractual agreement to desex. However, it was also quite common for breeders to put no onus on owners to desex their puppies – about one in five responses.

Table 8: Do you place any control over the reproductive potential of your dogs?

	n	%
A contract agreement regarding requirement to desex	104	41
No controls in place	60	24
Proportion of purchase fee returned on proof of desexing	56	22
Sold desexed	47	18
Other	47	18
Total	314	123

“Other” responses included: recommend desexing only, limited registration and puppies sold as pets only (not for breeding). The Board might consider these to be included as response options in future years.

## Evidence accepted as proof of desexing

A follow-up question was asked to clarify what breeders’ felt constituted “proof of desexing” if they required the owners to desex their puppies. Four response options were provided, which are shown in Table 9.

Before discussing results, we note the number of “Sold desexed” responses differs again from previous questions. Again, we would suggest that future research only include this question once, to avoid such issues.

Table 9 shows the most commonly accepted proof of desexing (by far, over other alternatives) is a sterilisation certificate from a registered vet. Only 15% will accept a verbal confirmation and even fewer (5%) require a more extreme binding sales contract.

Table 9: What evidence do you accept as proof of desexing?

	n	%
Sterilisation certificate from a registered vet	158	62
Verbal confirmation from owner	39	15
Puppies sold desexed	36	14
Legally binding sales contract	13	5
Missing	9	4
Total	255	100

## Age recommended for desexing

Breeders were asked at what age they would recommend new owners to desex their dogs. Most (85%) of breeders claimed they do give a recommendation. Of these, it was most common for breeders to recommend their puppies to be desexed between six and 12 months of age.

Table 10: At what age do you recommend desexing your puppies?

	n	%
3 to 6 months	30	12
6 to 12 months	155	61
12+ months	31	12
No recommendation on age	26	10
Missing	13	5
Total	255	100

This aligns with the findings from the research conducted with dog owners, also at the Royal Show in 2011 – around two in three owners had their dog desexed between six and 12 months of age.

## Microchipping puppies before homing

Table 11 shows that about eight in 10 breeders microchip their puppies before they go to their new home. It appears that microchipping by breeders is much more common than desexing. However, there was no relationship between breeders who desex puppies before selling them and breeders who microchip before selling, i.e. breeders who desex puppies are not more likely to microchip them as well.

Table 11: Do you microchip your puppies before they go to their new home?

	n	%
Yes	208	82
No	44	17
Missing	3	1
Total	255	100

## Breeder contact details on microchip registers

Breeders were asked if they put their own contact details as the secondary contact on the microchip registry. Of those who claimed to microchip their puppies, almost three in four put their contact details as a secondary contact on the microchip registry.

Table 12: Do you put your breeder contact details as the secondary contact on the microchip registry?

	n	%
Yes	151	73
No	51	25
Missing	6	3
Total	208	101

# FINDINGS: INFORMATION GIVEN TO OWNERS

Virtually all breeders claimed to provide an information pack to go with their puppies to their new homes. Of those who do provide information packs, just over half of them include Dog & Cat Management Board materials as part of this information pack.

Table 13: Do you provide an information pack to go with your puppies?

	n	%
Yes	247	97
No	6	2
Missing	1	<1
Total	255	99

Table 14: Do you include D&CMB information materials within this information pack?

	n	%
Yes	137	55
No	106	43
Missing	4	2
Total	247	100

In future years, the Board could use this survey as a mean to find out more information as to why only half of breeders provide the Board’s materials in packs given to owners, e.g., are they difficult to obtain, not considered important, can be obtained from other sources (vets, councils), etc.

# APPENDIX 1: SURVEY

## Breeder Questionnaire



Government of South Australia  
Dog and Cat Management Board

Please tick appropriate answer

- 01** Which State canine controlling body are you a member of, eg Dogs SA, Dogs Vic, etc?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 02** How long have you been producing ANKC registered puppies? (years)  
 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10+
- 03** How many litters do you breed each year?  
 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10+
- 04** What is your average litter size?  
 1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10+
- 05** At what age do you place your puppies in new homes?  
 8-10 weeks  
 11-12 weeks  
 3-6 months  
 6+ months
- 06** Do you suggest particular puppies for particular homes based on their personality?  
 Yes  No
- 07** Do you desex your puppies before they go to their new home?  
 Yes  No
- 08** Do you place any control over the reproductive potential of your dogs through any of the following means:  
 A contract agreement regarding the requirement to desex?  
 A proportion of the purchase fee returned on presentation of proof of desexing?  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 No controls in place  
 Puppies sold desexed
- 09** What do evidence do you accept as proof of desexing?  
 Sterilisation Certificate from a registered vet  
 Legally binding sales contract  
 Verbal confirmation from owner  
 Puppies sold desexed
- 10** At what age do you recommend desexing your puppies?  
 3-6 months  
 6-12 months  
 12+ months  
 No recommendation on age specification
- 11** Do you microchip your puppies before they go to their new home?  
 Yes  No
- 12** Do you put your breeder contact details as the secondary contact on the microchip registry?  
 Yes  No
- 13** Do you provide an information pack to go with your puppies?  
 Yes  No
- 14** Do you include Dog and Cat Management Board information materials within this information pack?  
 Yes  No

### Optional Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for completing  
this questionnaire.**

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