

Health Presentation

Based on 2020 Breed Health Survey

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Limitations:

- Self-selected survey
- Numbers
- Honesty
- Accuracy
- Complexity



What are we hoping to do?

- Take a snapshot of our breed in 2020
- Assess how well the current health testing regime appears to be working
- Assess awareness of current health testing regime
- Compare various health issues across time
- Attempt to identify potential new health issues



Some general observations:

- Total 339 SWDs
- Taken mostly from UK, Europe, USA and Canada
- Some misunderstandings filling in survey
- Some questions confusing
- Most dogs living
- Some incomplete records
- Concentration on physical health



Other results for these SWD...

- The majority of respondents did not know the C.O.I. for their dog(s)
- Many respondents did not give the KC registered name of their dog(s)
- 14% of SWDs have been DNA profiled



Current SWD Club health tests:

- Hip score, preferably BVA (once only)
- Gonioscopy/PLA eye test, repeated every 3 yrs
- Annual eye test
- DNA test for prcd PRA (Progressive Retinal Atrophy)
- DNA test for CHG (Congenital Hyperthyroidism with Goiter)
- DNA test for NAD (Neuroaxonal Dystrophy)



Additional SWD Club health tests

(approved AGM 2021)

- DNA test for EO (Early Onset) PRA
- DNA test for Brachyury (Natural bobtail)

(Laboklin SWD bundle currently covers prcd PRA, CHG, NAD, Brachyury and DM. EO PRA will be incorporated asap, currently available separately. All available with Club discount.)



Current health test takeup:

- 37% of the SWDs surveyed have been hip-scored
- 11% surveyed have been PLA tested
- 37% surveyed have been DNA tested for prcd PRA
- 33% surveyed have been DNA tested for CHG
- 28% surveyed have been DNA tested for NAD
- 30% surveyed have had an Annual Eye Test

*Probably biased towards SWD breeders, so probably figures are a lot lower in general SWD population



EO PRA- Early Onset PRA

- EO PRA usually starts with night blindness of young dogs, around 1 year old
- It progresses to less and less ability to see, in both dim and bright conditions, resulting in blindness before the dogs are 4 years old
- Currently 2 AFFECTED and 7 CARRIERS have been identified in the UK



EO PRA

- Can be DNA tested for easily and relatively cheaply
- The SWD Club has an arrangement for all Club members for concessions on DNA tests with Laboklin, who provide this test
- Tests can be done from mouth swabs, easily done at home

We fully expect that many dogs used for breeding in the UK will test CLEAR for the condition, but as the condition has such high impact for the dogs and owners involved, we feel that DNA testing is now the way ahead.



EO PRA

- Contact the Hon Sec for a members' concessions form:
sec.swdc@gmail.com
- When you have the health test results returned to you, please email the Kennel Club and they should be published for your dog (not immediately)

health@thekennelclub.org.uk



Brachyury - NBT

- The SWD Club recommends breeding only long tailed SWD to natural bobtails (NBT) to avoid any health problems in the puppies
- We can now know **absolutely** that we are doing this, by DNA testing all breeding dogs, particularly those which look as though they are long tailed (most shorter NBTs are usually obvious, but longer can be tricky)



Brachyury - NBT

- It is good breeding practice to have the puppies examined by a vet in the first few days after birth
- At this vet check, breeders are encouraged to ask the vet to certify those of the puppies which appear to be NBT
- This certificate, a copy of which should be filed at the vets' surgery, will serve as proof that these pups were not docked
- You can now register puppies with the Kennel Club online service as NBT in our breed- as a Club, we encourage you to do this to avoid future confusion



Brachyury DNA test- NBT

- The SWD Club has an arrangement for all Club members for concessions on DNA tests with Laboklin, who provide this test as part of their SWD bundle (including prcd PRA, Brachyury, CHG, NAD and DM)
- Tests can be done from mouth swabs, easily done at home
- Contact the Hon Sec for a members' concessions form:
sec.swdc@gmail.com



New physical health issues?:

- 1) Cruciate issues
- 2) Epilepsy
- 3) Hyperthyroidism (too high)
- 4) Hypothyroidism (too low)
- 5) Allergies
- 6) Auto-Immune conditions



1 Cruciate ligament issues

- In 2017, 0.79% of respondents reported cruciate issues (4 cases)
- In 2020, this has risen to **3.24%** (11 cases)
- This is a statistically significant **rise** in cases
- Across all breeds, 0.67%*



Rise in cruciate issues- why?

- Breed specific issues:
 - ‘Moderate angulation’ of the breed?
 - Many SWD participate in athletic sports
 - In 2017, 3 of the 4 SWDs participated in Gundog work
 - In 2020, 5 of the 11 SWDs participated in high impact activities (Agility, Gundog work, Cani-X)
 - Genetic aspect- but the average C.O.I. for the 2020 dogs was 6.3% (ie not particularly high)



Rise in cruciate issues- why?

- Environmental/ developmental issues
 - More slippery floors mean even puppies slip repeatedly
 - Ball launchers/ repetitive ball throwing, leading to sudden changes in direction
- General issues
 - Across all breeds, Lameness accounted for 2.65% in 2016 *
 - More vigilant owners?
 - Rise in dog insurance?
 - Vets more keen to operate rather than treat conservatively?



Recommendations:

1) Keeping a balanced diet

Decent amount of protein for growth and repair of tissues

Addition of Omega-3 oils (fish oil), helps with joint care and development

2. Taking daily exercise

This ensures that the muscles remain strong and flexible to support joints

Two walks per day is ideal

3. Avoiding “weekend warrior syndrome”

If you don't do much during the week and then do a lot at the weekend, this is not good for your dog's joints

Exercise across the week should remain consistent to avoid damage to muscles or joints

4. Maintaining a healthy weight



Recommendations cont.:

5. Recognising early signs

Early recognition means there will be more treatment options

Success rates are also higher

Early signs of CCL damage:

- Swelling of the affected joint
- Unwillingness to weight-bear on affected joint
- Lameness/ limping
- Holding up the affected rear leg or foot
- Difficulty changing position to standing from sitting or lying
- Walking stiffly or unsteadily
- Some resistance to joint being touched or handled
- Stiffness on getting up in the morning

Thanks to <https://physio-vet.co.uk/>



Recommendations cont.:

6. Changes in the way we bring up our puppies/ young dogs:

- Make sure solid floors are non slip, including in the whelping box
- Prevent puppies particularly from slipping as much as possible
- Stop puppies jumping up and down stairs or on and off the sofa

7. Changes in management of our dogs' joints, even when dogs are fit and healthy

- Teach a wait instead of throwing balls and then send the dog- avoids sudden changes in direction
- Teach a wait and throw ball into long grass for searching – much lower impact on joints
- Ensure warm up and warm down when participating in high impact activities, eg agility
- Consider getting dogs checked by a vet-physio regularly if they are working hard



Take-home messages:

- ✓ Continue to monitor and be aware of our dogs' movement, especially as they age
- ✓ Take prompt action if any signs are seen ; make a diary of events/ symptoms and take to vets'/ vet-physio
- ✓ Make changes to the way our dogs are kept and exercised, if necessary, to protect their joints



2 Epilepsy

- In 2017, 1.77% of respondents reported Epilepsy (9 cases)
 - In 2020, 1.80% reported Epilepsy (6 cases)
 - This is **NOT** a statistically significant rise in cases
 - The average C.O.I. for 2020 cases is 7.1%
- * Remember, we only have reports for 339 dogs...



3 Hyperthyroidism

- In 2017, 0.59% of respondents reported Hyperthyroidism (3 cases)
 - In 2020, 0.30% reported Hyperthyroidism (1 case)
 - This is **NOT** a statistically significant drop in cases
- * Remember, we only have reports for 339 dogs...



4 Hypothyroidism

- In 2017, 2.36% of respondents reported Hypothyroidism (12 cases)
 - In 2020, 0.60% reported Hypothyroidism (2 cases)
 - This is a statistically significant **drop** in cases
- * Remember, we only have reports for 339 dogs...



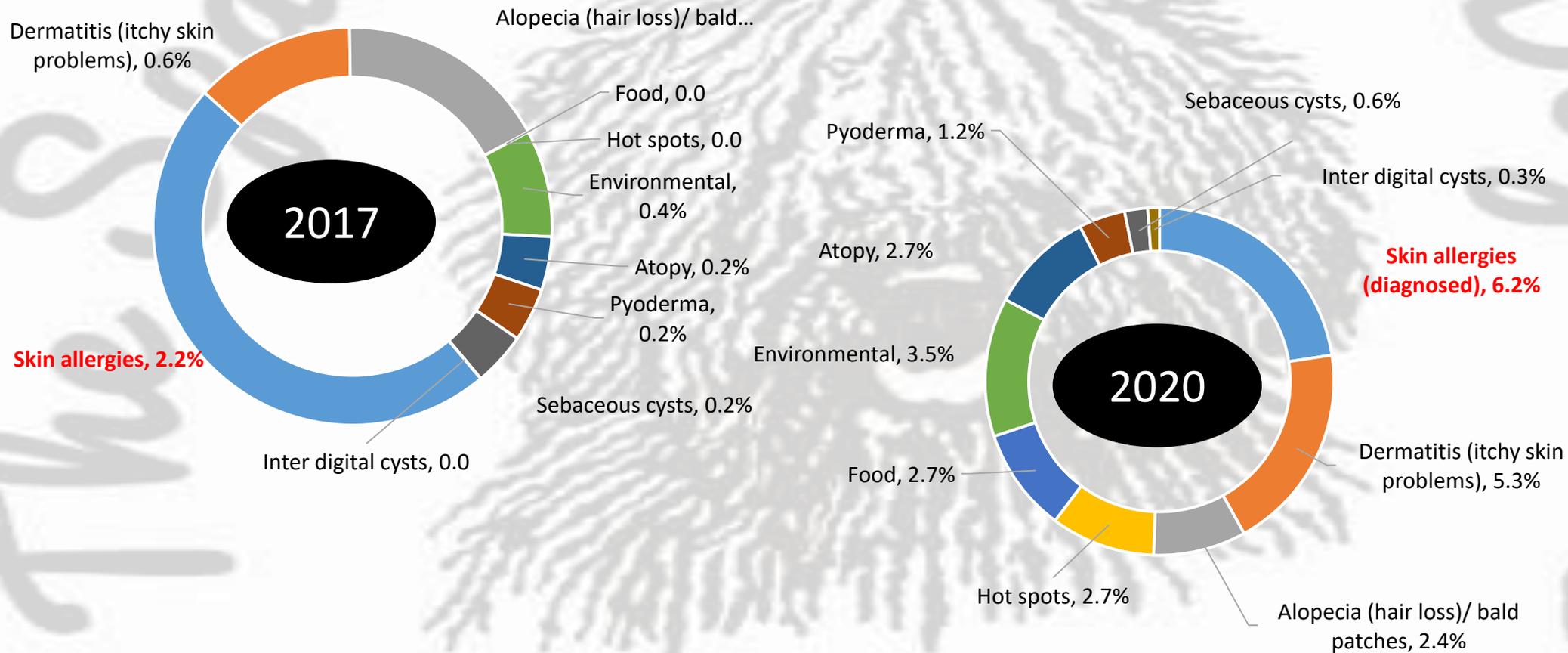
5 Allergies

- In 2017, 3.14% of respondents reported Allergies (16 cases)
 - 1 of these dogs was also Hypothyroid (0.2%)
 - 3 of these dogs mentioned Dermatitis (0.59%)
 - 14 mentioned Allergies under Immune System (2.75%)
- In 2020, 9.43% reported Allergies (31 cases)
 - 6.2% were Skin allergies- diagnosed by vets
 - 5.3% mentioned Dermatitis
 - 3.5% were Environmental allergies
 - 2.4% mentioned Atopy (itching)
 - 2.7% mentioned Hot Spots



5 Allergies (cont).

- This is a statistically significant **rise** in reported cases



Allergies- why the rise?

- More popular to test for allergies
- Closer breeding/ higher C.O.I.s?
- Breeding from affected dogs? (allergies are inherited)
- More environmental factors around?
- Choice of foods?
- Paler dogs used for breeding?



Allergies- how can they be reduced?

- Lower C.O.I.s- allergies are usually inherited

2017 Average C.O.I. not available for these 16 dogs

2020 Average C.O.I. for these 31 dogs = **10.00%**

2020 Average C.O.I. around 5%

- Health test parents/ be aware
- Don't breed from affected bitches/ dogs
- Informed decisions on choice of foods
- Share information



6 Auto-immune conditions

- In 2017, 0.59% of respondents reported Auto-Immune conditions (3 cases)
- In 2020, 1.47% reported Auto-Immune conditions (5 cases)
- This is **NOT** a statistically significant change in reported cases



Take-away messages:

1. Keep health testing

- It informs us, as owners, about the health of our dogs and therefore likely longevity, especially if those SWDs are working/ competing/ training at any level
- It contributes to our knowledge of the breed overall
- It informs good decision making in breeding
- It informs future directions of research/study

2. Keep sharing information

- It helps get a picture of the breed world-wide
- Members sign up to our Code of Ethics which asks them to participate in health research for the breed
- It informs future directions of research/ study



Take-away messages:

3. Continue to strive to produce the best Spanish Water Dogs possible

- The Club is striving to support ethical breeders who do the best by their puppy owners
- The Club's Health Sub Committee is continually considering the health of the breed
- The Club is also keeping an eye out for anyone breaking the Code Of Ethics they have signed up for (that's all Club members, breeders or not)
- Imports may not have as much information as those born here



Any questions?

Please feel free to ask now or email me any questions about this presentation, I will do my best to answer them or find out the answers!

Where now?

- There will be a copy of this presentation on the Club website, I will also be producing an accompanying report for the physical health issues discussed.
- I intend to go back to the 2017 survey and make some comparisons in terms of the reported behavioural traits of our breed and whether this has changed appreciably in 2020.
- I hope to carry out a 'reproductive survey' later in 2020 to ask breeders more about breeding and rearing issues.
- I plan to carry out a survey geared more towards pet owners in 2022.
- Please keep an eye on the Club website for blogs and information about interesting health issues on an ongoing basis.

Reference:

Prevalence of commonly diagnosed disorders in UK dogs under primary veterinary care: results and applications,

Dan G O'Neill, Hannah James, Dave C. Brodbelt, David B. Church and Camilla Pegram

BMC Veterinary Research, (2021) 17:69

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12917-021-02775-3>