

Crossbreed dogs may not be as healthy as we first thought;

The largest-ever study into the health of crossbreeds busts myths about what makes a healthy dog

BBC Science Focus · 15 Oct 2024 · 20

If you've ever considered getting a dog, you've probably been given the same advice as every other potential owner: get a crossbreed. With longer lives and healthier bodies, these dogs are the obvious choice... or so we thought.

A new study from the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), London suggests otherwise, finding that the overall health of designer crossbreeds (crossbreeds from two purebred dogs) is largely similar to their parents. "The popularity of designer crossbreeds has boomed over the past decade in the UK," said Dr Rowena Packer, senior author of the study and lecturer at the RVC.

"However, our previous research discovered that many are purchased based on assumed characteristics that are not well-evidenced, such as perceptions they are hypoallergenic, good with children and have good health."

The study, the largest ever on the health of designer crossbreeds, surveyed 9,402 UK owners of three common crossbreeds (cockapoos, labradoodles and cavapoos) and their parent breeds (cocker spaniels, labrador retrievers, cavalier king charles spaniels and poodles). The researchers used owner-reported information to compare the likelihood of each breed having one of 57 common disorders in dogs.

They discovered that there was no difference between the designer crossbred and purebred dogs in the likelihood of getting 86.8 per cent of these disorders. For the other 13.2 per cent, there was a difference between breeds, but no link between whether they were crossbred or purebred: each type was equally likely to have these disorders. Among the disorders that designer crossbreeds were more likely to have, ear infections came top. Cockapoos also had a higher chance of itchy skin. However, both labradoodles and cockapoos had a lower risk of slipping kneecaps compared to their parent breeds.

"Our foremost priority should be overall dog welfare," said Gina Bryson, lead author of the paper.