

# Factors associated with owner acquisition of puppies under 8 weeks of age.

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## Objectives

To identify owner- and dog-related risk factors associated with acquisition of puppies under the recommended age of 8 weeks.

## Methods

The owner-reported data used in this analysis were collected from online questionnaires completed by puppy owners living in the UK and ROI who registered puppies <16 weeks of age into a longitudinal study.

Multivariable logistic regression was used to test for associations between acquisition at <8 weeks of age and potential explanatory variables (including breed (specific named/mixed/unknown), source of puppy, whether puppies were viewed with mother and/or father, previous dog ownership and number of times the puppy was viewed before acquisition).

## Results

Excluding home-bred puppies, 26.5% (423/1597) were acquired <8 weeks of age. Two variables were retained in the model:

- i) owners who had owned other dogs during adulthood were more likely to acquire puppies <8 weeks old, compared with 'first time owners' or those 'who had a family dog as a child but not subsequently' (OR=1.45, 95%CI 1.09-1.92, P<0.010)
- ii) owners who visited their puppy at least once before acquisition were more likely to obtain puppies <8 weeks old, compared with owners who did not see their puppy before acquisition (OR=1.74, 95%CI 1.34-2.27, P<0.001).

## Statement (conclusions)

Advice regarding minimum acquisition age was not followed by 26.5% of this cohort, particularly those with previous dog ownership experience. Future research within this longitudinal study will investigate the influence acquisition age has on various health/behaviour outcomes, with the potential to provide evidence for puppy purchasing recommendations regarding minimum age at acquisition.