

The coronavirus puppy boom - one in four admit impulse buying a pandemic puppy

New research from the Kennel Club shows a quarter of new owners admit buying a puppy during the coronavirus pandemic with little research

More than two in five bought a puppy to be their Covid companion and two thirds agree that their dog was a 'lifeline in lockdown'

However nearly one in four pandemic puppy buyers admit they could have inadvertently bought from a puppy farm, and a fifth don't know whether their dog will suit their lifestyle after lockdown - citing worries about behaviour, time and costs

Kennel Club launches campaign helping owners to #BePuppywise - providing vital resources and advice from how to avoid being scammed and buy a puppy responsibly, to training tips for pandemic pets

New statistics provide a state-of-the-nation picture of life in lockdown, as thousands sought canine companionship to get through the isolation and anxiety caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The research, released this week by the Kennel Club as part of its #BePuppywise campaign, shows 41 per cent of those who bought a pandemic puppy said the main reason was to have a lockdown companion, 38 per cent said it was because they were at home more, and 27 per cent got their puppy to help them or their family through the difficult lockdown period.

Almost two thirds (63 per cent) of those who bought a puppy during the pandemic believed lockdown was the perfect time to get a puppy – with three quarters also stating their dog was the best thing about lockdown – yet thousands missed red flags in the process:

27 per cent paid money before actually seeing their puppy

42 per cent didn't see the puppy's breeding environment, in real-life or via video call

An overwhelming 83 per cent weren't asked any questions by the breeder about their suitability as owners

With many desperate for a four-legged companion, a worrying one in four (25 per cent) spent less than two hours doing their research, leaving them particularly vulnerable to scams and unable to spot the signs of an unscrupulous breeder. Shockingly, almost a quarter (24 per cent) of pandemic puppy buyers also think their puppy could have originated from a puppy farm.

Welfare organisations like the Kennel Club are also concerned about the consequences of these quick decisions as lockdown lifts:

One in five new owners who bought a puppy during the pandemic admit they hadn't fully considered the long-term commitment or responsibility that comes with having a dog

18 per cent are not sure how they will look after their dog when they return to work – in fact only just over half (52 per cent) said they had taken this in to consideration before getting their puppy

Nearly a quarter (22 per cent) are concerned about their puppy's socialisation and behaviour due to lockdown restrictions, including when meeting other people and dogs. Less than half (45 per cent) researched puppy training before getting their dog

15 per cent are worried about whether they can afford their dog and associated costs - like insurance, food, and vet bills – and one in three (34 per cent) don't have pet insurance

15 per cent agree in hindsight, they weren't ready to get a puppy

Following this research, which illustrates a nation in need of puppy love

yet with increasingly hasty buying habits accompanied by worrying consequences, the Kennel Club has launched its #BePuppywise campaign, urging people to take their time and do proper research when getting a dog. The campaign provides advice, tools and resources, from videos to top tips for both potential owners to help them find the right dog and breeder, and prepare for their new family member, as well as those new owners who are struggling with their pandemic puppy, helping them care for their new best friend as lockdown lifts and beyond.

"Our dogs are certainly helping us through the pandemic, providing a welcome and happy distraction as Covid-19 causes anxiety, suffering and disruption across the nation," commented Bill Lambert, Head of Health and Welfare at the Kennel Club. "However we do have concerns about those puppies which may have been bought on impulse, without owners doing their homework on how or where to get a dog responsibly, or fully realising a puppy is a new family member for life, not a short-term commodity.

"These hasty decisions not only play into the hands of the opportunistic scammers and puppy farmers operating during the pandemic – but can also sadly result in puppies being rehomed if owners haven't carefully considered how their dog will fit their 'normal' life. In the current climate it's never been more crucial to be puppywise via thorough, extensive research, taking time to find the right dog and breeder, and being aware of the red flags, as well as preparing for your new arrival and being a responsible owner. By wising up, you're actively taking steps to prevent a potentially damaging lockdown legacy for puppies across the UK."

The Kennel Club has produced a 'litter in lockdown' video with Dragons' Den entrepreneur and KC Assured Breeder, Jenny Campbell, which shows puppy buyers what a responsible breeder looks like, and how to be a responsible new puppy owner during the pandemic. The video and more tips on how to #BePuppywise is available at www.thekennelclub.org.uk/be-puppywise.

Jenny added: "Puppies take time, effort and care! And a 'pandemic puppy' will certainly need an extra hand in their training and socialisation. By being puppywise, and making use of the Kennel Club's tips, expert advice and resources to work out if you're ready for a puppy and how to buy one responsibly, as well as understanding your puppy and how to be a good owner, your canine companion will be happy and healthy, providing you with a lifetime of happiness, fun and a new best friend."

BePuppywise checklist

- Make sure you're ready for a dog
- Find the right breed for you
- Know what a responsible breeder looks like, consider a Kennel Club Assured Breeder
- Find out which health tests to look for
- Visit the breeder and see your puppy in its breeding environment, with its mum
- Be aware of rogue breeder red flags
- Take time with your decision
- Prepare for the arrival of your puppy
- Research puppy training and understand how to be a responsible dog owner
- Enjoy life with your new best friend!