

The **English Cocker Spaniel** remains a popular breed in the UK and has generally been considered to have good health. Breeders of pedigree English Cocker Spaniels are recommended to test for eye disorders, hip dysplasia and a range of DNA tests. But what are the most common and important health issues of English Cocker Spaniels that owners should look out for, and how healthy overall is this breed?

This study aimed to describe the demography and common disorders in English Cocker Spaniels by using information from anonymised veterinary clinical records from the VetCompass™ Programme.



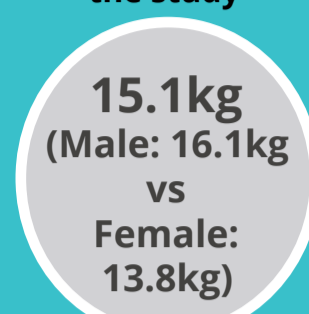
Number of English Cocker Spaniels in the study



Average lifespan of English Cocker Spaniels in the study



Average bodyweight of English Cocker Spaniels in the study

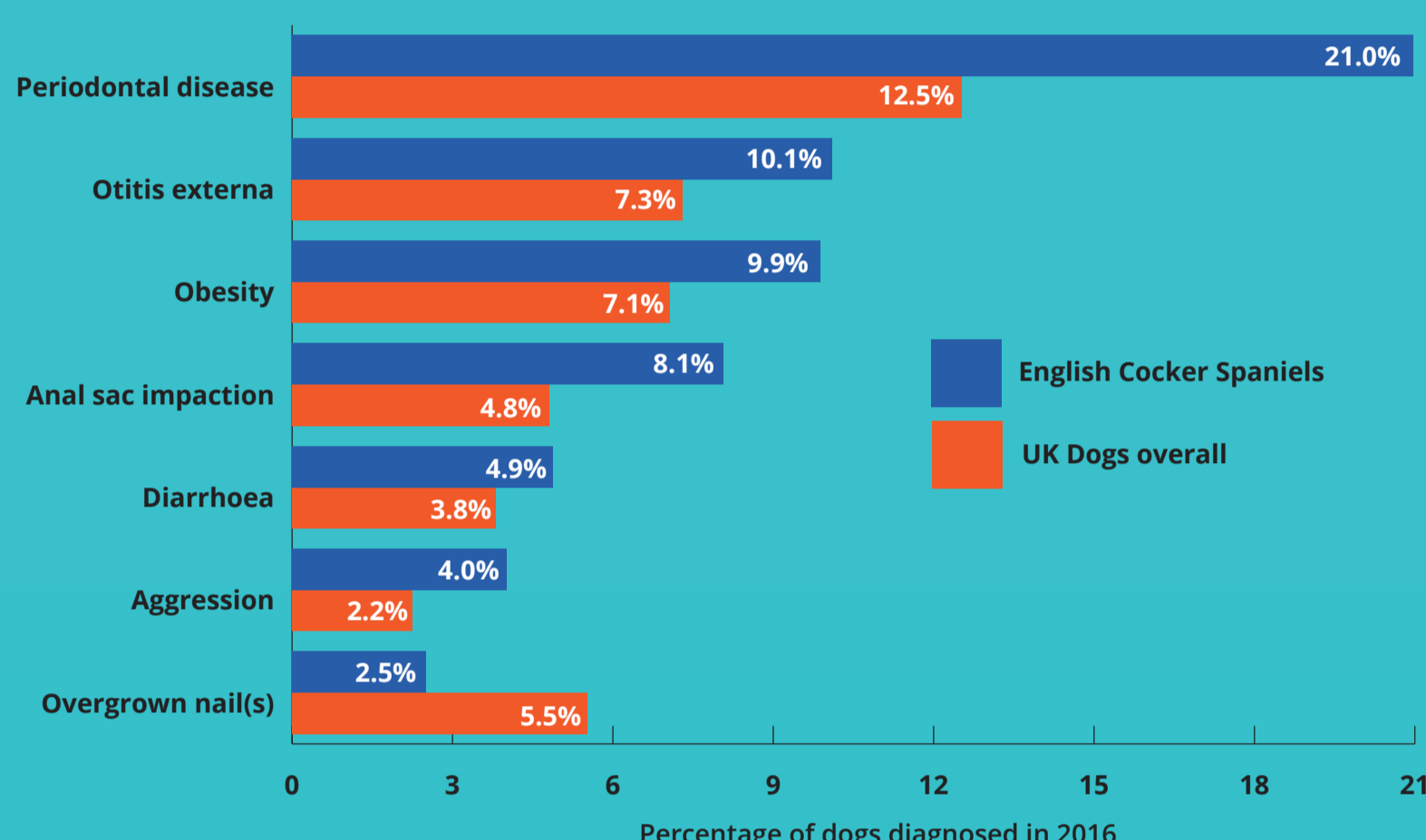


Most commonly diagnosed disorders

The most commonly diagnosed disorders in English Cocker Spaniels were **periodontal disease** (infection of the tissues that hold the teeth in place), **otitis externa** (inflammation of the external ear canal), **obesity** and **anal sac impaction**.

The order of the most commonly diagnosed disorders in English Cocker Spaniels was similar to that previously reported in dogs overall*, but the frequencies of these top disorders were generally **more common in English Cocker Spaniels** than the general dog population.

Comparison of the most common disorders in English Cocker Spaniels compared to UK dogs overall*

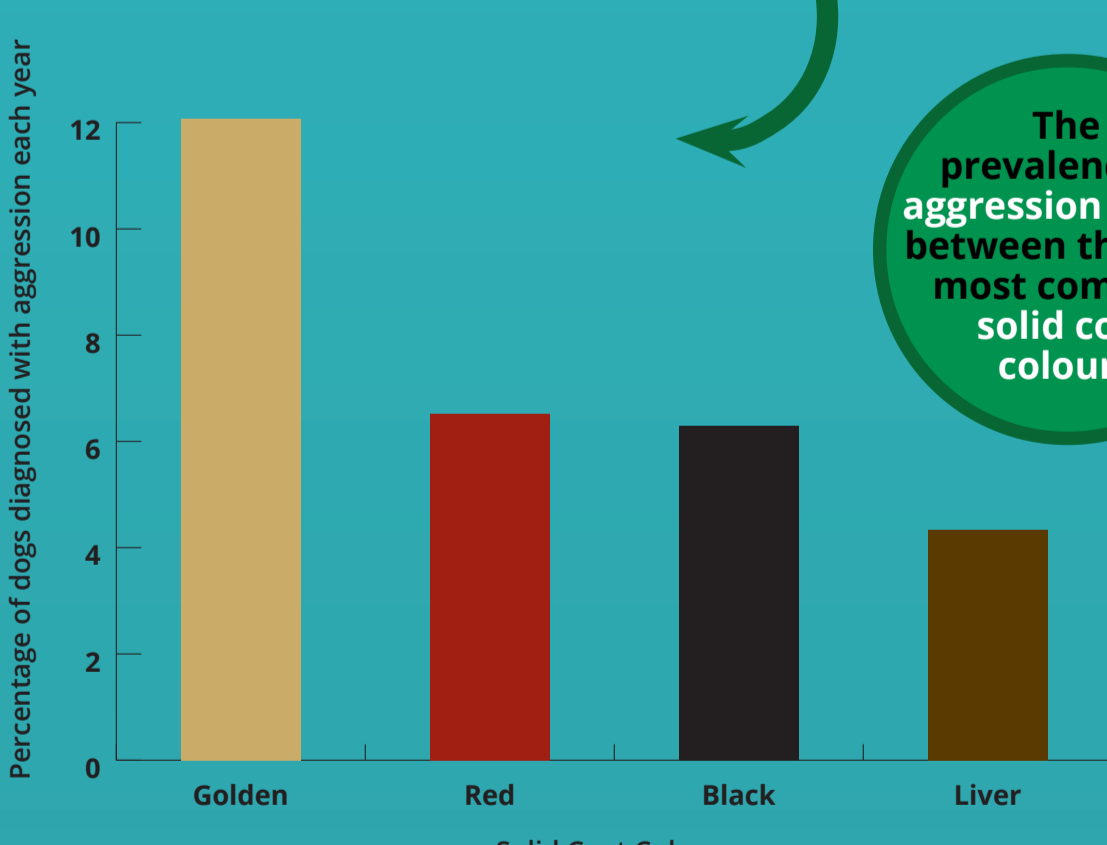
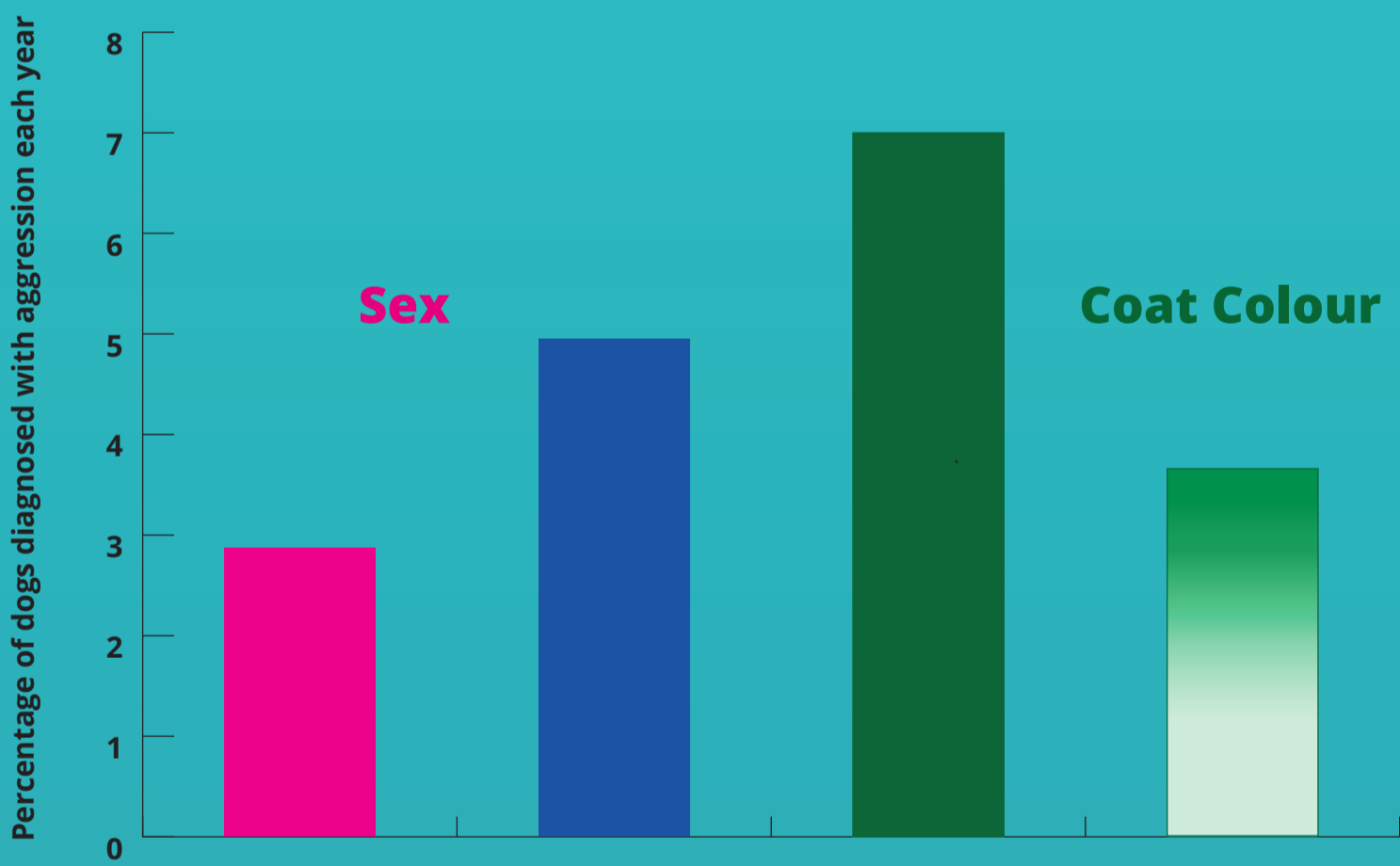


*O'Neill et al. (2021) Prevalence of commonly diagnosed disorders in UK dogs under primary veterinary care: results and applications. BMC Veterinary Research

Among the most common disorders in English Cocker Spaniels, **females** had a higher probability of **dental disorders, obesity, masses, and urinary tract disorders**, while **males** had a higher probability of **undesirable behaviours**.

Aggression

Aggression was relatively common in English Cocker Spaniels compared to dogs in general, but the frequency differed depending on the **sex** and **coat colour** of the dogs: aggression was more common in **males** than **females**, and in **solid-coloured** than bi-coloured dogs.



The prevalence of aggression varied between the four most common solid coat colours

Conclusions

The order of the most common disorders in English Cocker Spaniels were similar to those reported in dogs overall, suggesting that the health profile of English Cocker Spaniels is typical of dogs overall.

However, a higher frequency of dental, ear and anal gland problems suggests they may be more prone to disorders related to their body shapes with long ears and loose skin, especially on their face.

Periodontal disease was the most common condition affecting the breed, which highlights the importance of regular veterinary dental checks and as well as tooth brushing in English Cocker Spaniels.

The results can aid vets in giving evidence-based breed-adapted health information to dog owners and support breeding organisations by identifying priorities for English Cocker Spaniel health and welfare e.g. aggression avoidance. The current health schemes do not appear to reflect the top health priorities of the breed.

[CLICK TO READ THE FULL STUDY](#)

Engdahl et al. (2023) "Demography and disorders of English Cocker Spaniels under primary veterinary care in the UK" DOI: 10.1186/s40575-023-00128-x

RVC VetCompass <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass> carries out welfare research based on anonymised clinical information shared from over 30% of UK veterinary practices. We are very grateful to the owners and veterinary professionals who contribute to VetCompass research.