Dachshund Health Report 2025

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Introduction

This report summarises the key health data we have available on the breed in the UK, collected by us, together with information on the work of Dachshund Health UK during the year.

Our health priorities during 2025 were:

- Reduce the risk of IVDD by promoting the use of screening and by educating owners about lifestyle risk factors
- Increase buyer and breeder awareness of the breed to influence responsible buying/breeding decisions

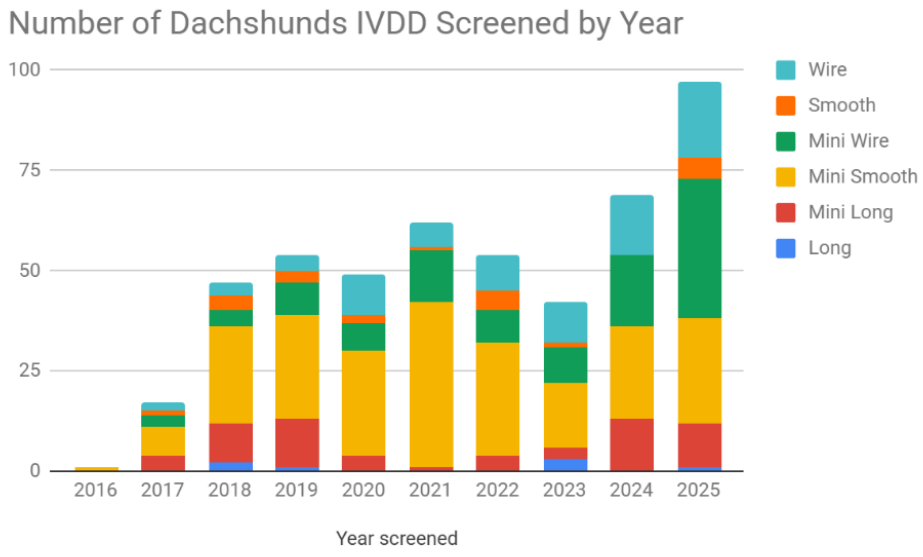
Intervertebral Disc Disease (IVDD)

This remains the single most significant health issue facing the breed, albeit with different prevalence across the 6 UK varieties.

The main tool we currently have to help breeders make informed decisions is X-ray screening. This is based on several decades of research carried out, mostly in the Nordic countries. There is clear evidence that dogs with fewer calcifications in their spine have a lower risk of herniation. Our own screening results also confirm these findings.

UK Screening Programme Data

We now have data on nearly 500 Dachshunds X-ray screened in the UK and we saw an encouraging increase in take-up of the scheme in 2025, despite the RKC ending its £100 subsidy. This still represents less than 1% of the breed being screened. As a proportion of registrations, Wire and Mini Wire breeders are the most proactive in using the screening programme.



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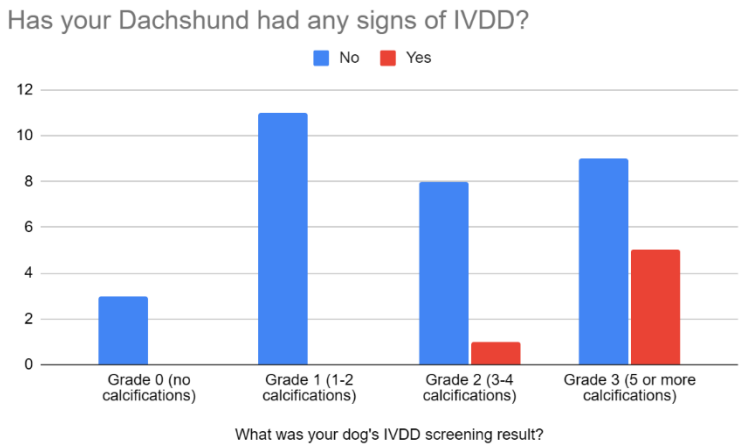
Our UK survey of screened dogs found that dogs aged 7 or older with a screening Grade 3 result were 12 times more likely to have had an IVDD incident than dogs with Grades 0, 1 or 2. This was statistically significant even with the relatively small number of dogs screened here in the UK.



Conservative Treatment of IVDD

DHUK provided funding for a study at Cambridge Vet School into the use of conservative treatment of IVDD. The results were published during 2024 and showed that 96% of dogs who still had feeling in their back legs (DPP) regained the ability to walk within 12 weeks.

Many vets have long believed that surgery is the best or only option for dogs who can't walk due to IVDD. This study shows that conservative management can be successful in many cases, especially if the dog still has feeling in its back legs. The study gives us a clearer picture of how long recovery might take. While some dogs recovered quickly, others took several weeks. This information can help owners and vets make more informed decisions about treatment and prognosis.

Ref: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/jvim.17149

The Genetics of IVDD

We have known for some time that a retrogene on Chromosome 12 is associated with increased risk of IVDD. Over the past couple of years, several of the Nordic countries have been collecting data on the genotype of Dachshunds to understand the frequency of the CDDY mutation in their breed populations. DHUK is currently supporting another research project at Cambridge Vet School to investigate the genetics of IVDD. At the end of 2024, an important study (Sullivan et al) reported the relationship between disc calcification (measured by K-number/K-n from x-ray screening) and the FGF4L2 gene in Dachshunds. Here are the key findings from the analysis of a sample of Norwegian and Finnish Dachshunds:

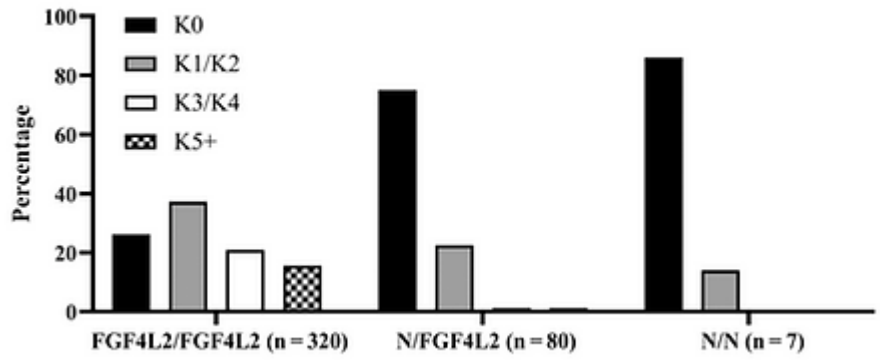
Genetics and Disc Health:

- Dachshunds with one normal copy of the gene (N/FGF4L2) have significantly better spinal health than those with two copies of FGF4L2

- 75% of dogs with one normal copy had the best possible score (K0)

- 98% of dogs with at least one normal copy had low-risk scores (K0-K2)

- Only 1% of dogs with one normal copy had high-risk scores (K5+)



Distribution of K-number and genotype (Fig. 1 from the paper)

Practical Implications:

- Breeding dogs with one normal copy (N/FGF4L2) is likely to produce puppies with better spinal health

- Both K-number and FGF4L2 status should be considered when choosing breeding stock

- Given the gene's high frequency in Dachshunds, aiming for one normal copy is more practical than trying to breed for two normal copies

Risk Levels:

- K0: ~7% risk of disc disease

- K1/2: ~12% risk

- K3/4: ~23% risk

- K5+: ~69% risk

Spinal X-ray screening is listed as a “Good Practice” for all 6 varieties of Dachshund in the Kennel Club’s Health Standard.

The researchers recommended developing breeding strategies that prioritise dogs with at least one normal copy of the gene, while using K-number scores to help select among dogs with two copies of FGF4L2.

Nordic Approach to IVDD

In 2025, an updated document, "IVDD doc update 2025 V6.pdf," described the programmes in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden) aimed at reducing the frequency of Intervertebral Disc Disease (IVDD) in the dachshund population. The purpose is to provide comprehensive information about the IVDD prevention efforts of each dachshund club or association in the Nordic countries to facilitate mutual learning and program improvement.

Key aspects discussed for each country include:

- **History of X-ray Screening:** Denmark, Finland, and Norway have had X-ray screening programs since the early 21st century, while Sweden launched its official program in 2021.
- **Current Status (as of October 2025):**
  - **Denmark (DGK):** Spinal X-ray imaging is **mandatory** for breeding, with restrictions on the use of dogs with 5 or more calcifications (K5+).
  - **Finland (FTK):** X-ray screening became **mandatory** for all dachshunds before breeding from January 1, 2025. The highest permissible result for the puppy and stud dog lists is K7.
  - **Norway (NDF):** X-ray screening is a **recommendation**. It is advised that both parents have a known spinal status.
  - **Sweden (SvTk):** X-ray screening is **voluntary**. The club is focusing on education and raising awareness.
- **IVDD and Calcification:** Approximately 15-20% of the dachshund population develops IVDD. The efforts to decrease IVDD frequency are based on a strong correlation between the number of calcified intervertebral discs (IDC or K-number) and the incidence of IVDD.
- **Genetic Testing:** The latest action line is genetic testing for the FGF4-12 gene variant.
  - Finland and Norway introduced genetic testing in 2023.
  - In Norway, 17% of tested dachshunds carry the normal/wild-type gene (N-gene).
  - In all Nordic countries, genetic testing is being implemented in various ways from 2025.
  - The goal is to gradually decrease the frequency of the underlying risk factor (FGF4-12) by prioritizing the use of dogs with at least one copy of the normal gene variant in breeding.

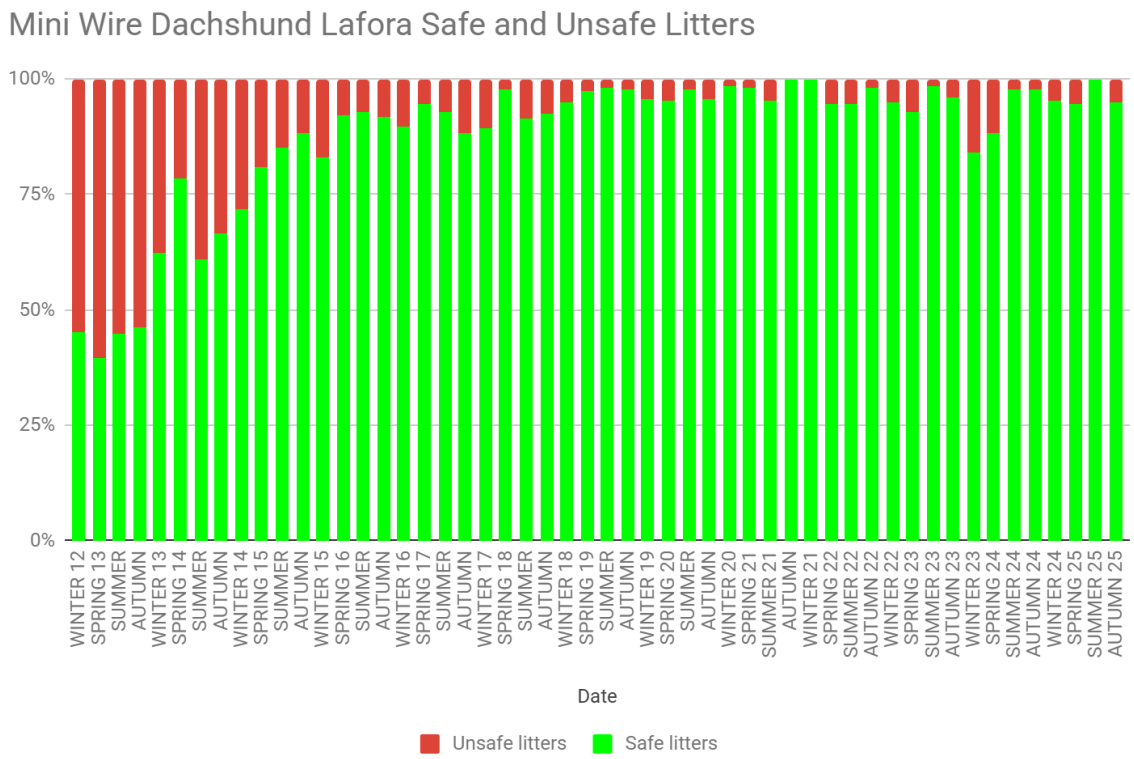
Future Plans: Future strategies involve:

- Minimising risk among dogs carrying FGF4-12 by X-raying and breeding those with few calcifications.
- Gradually decreasing the frequency of FGF4-12 through DNA testing.

- Norway and Finland have specific breeding recommendations to increase the prevalence of the normal gene.
- **Transparency:** All four Nordic countries' national kennel clubs publish results from X-ray screening and genetic testing on their publicly accessible websites.

Lafora Disease

We continue to monitor the use of the DNA test for Lafora Disease and are grateful to Mandy Dance (WHDC Chair) for collating the results from the KC Breed Records Supplement each quarter. The most recent results are for Q3 2025:



On a 12-month moving average, 96% of litters are “safe”, with no risk of affected puppies.

DNA testing for Lafora Disease is listed as a “Good Practice” for Mini Wire Dachshunds in the Kennel Club’s Health Standard.

Eye Disease

DHUK has been subsidising KC/BVA eye screening sessions for several years now. These tests have also been subsidised by the Dachshund Club and we are grateful to Daphne Graham who organises these sessions and to Professor Peter Bedford (ophthalmologist). The good news is that Peter invariably reports that the dogs he screens have healthy eyes.

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DNA testing for cord1 PRA is listed as a "Best Practice" for all 3 varieties of Miniature Dachshund in the Kennel Club's Health Standard. This follows a review by the KC's Health Standard Advisory Panel who discussed the discordance of the RPGRIP1 mutation and PRA(cord1). The KC advised as follows:

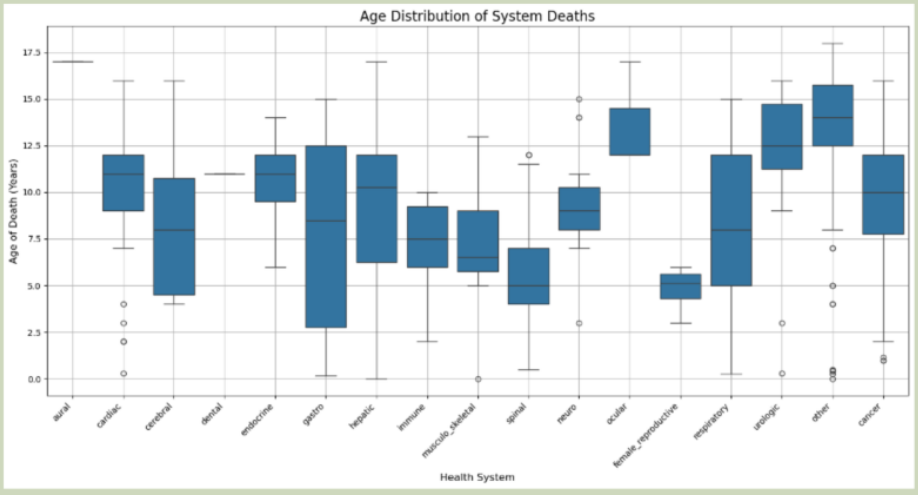
There was a lengthy discussion on this and the difficulties we have with breeders being under the impression that the test is definitive for clinical outcome, and as such it was recommended by the group that we change the way in which we record results for this, and switch to these being risk based, given that the mutation has some association with the disease but is not definitive. Dr Mellersh was part of the discussion and suggested that whilst the MAP9 modifier is not available for purchase, and is unlikely to be anytime in the future, the RPGRIP1 mutation may have use in reducing the likelihood of dogs being bred that carry both mutant genes, given that both are needed to influence the more severe clinical outcome. However, given that we know there is discordance here and the test has limited use it was agreed by the group that it be re-categorised as a category 2 (Best Practice) test for the Dachshund varieties.

Longevity

As part of our ongoing health monitoring survey, we also collect information on causes and age of death. During 2025, a student at Leeds University analysed our data to help us understand more about longevity and mortality.

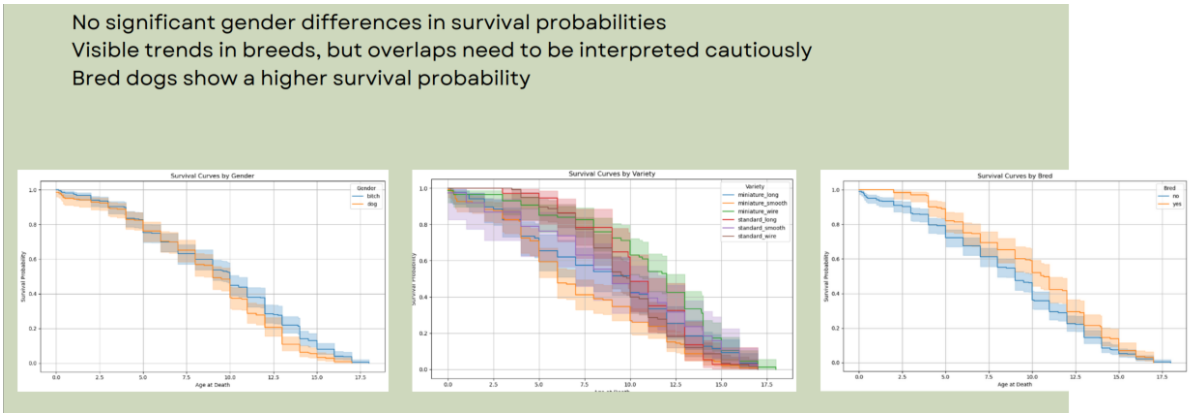
Age-to-death

Health systems such as gastrointestinal, spinal, and cancer exhibit both low median ages of diagnosis and death, indicating rapidly progressing conditions with short intervals between detection and mortality.



There were some interesting findings when Survival Curves were calculated:

- Dogs that had been bred from outlived dogs that weren't bred from
- Mini Smooths, as a variety, had a significantly higher risk of mortality than any of the others



Based on 15 years of reports:

	Age of death (Mean)	**Age of Diagnosis (Mean)**
Cancers	9.6	9
Cardiac	10.3	7.9
Epilepsy	8.7	3.3
Gastric Lymphoma	7.5	7.3
IVDD	5.6	5.4
Lafora	9.4	7.4
Old Age	15.3	
Skin Conditions		3.1

Genetic Diversity

As with all breeds with closed stud books, the loss of genetic diversity is a key issue and threat to future health and viability of a breed. It is well-known that inbred populations have a higher risk of deleterious genetic mutations causing health problems as well as lower fertility and smaller litter sizes.

Towards the end of 2024, the KC provided updated genetic diversity reports to Breed Health Coordinators. At the time of writing, BHCs are in the process of sharing these reports for initial feedback. Unsurprisingly, the key issues highlighted (not just for Dachshunds) are:

- The potential negative impact of the use of Popular Sires
- An increasing trend of imported dogs and for these to be more widely used in breeding programmes

- Reduced litter sizes associated with increases in the Coefficient of Inbreeding (COI)
- An increasing proportion of litters from dogs that do not have a Stud Book qualification (i.e. more "pet litters")
- A general reduction in breed average COI, largely associated with increasing numbers of imported dogs

The Breed Average COI for each variety (@Dec. 2025 – Source: RKC website):

Smooth	3.8%	Mini Smooth	4.8%
Long	11.0%	Mini Long	4.0%
Wire	1.9%	Mini Wire	4.1%

Education and Communication

We continue to grow our reach across our social media channels.

Our DHUK Facebook page has over 2,300 followers. Our DHUK website and blog had nearly 107,000 unique visitors in 2025. The most visited blog (news) posts were:

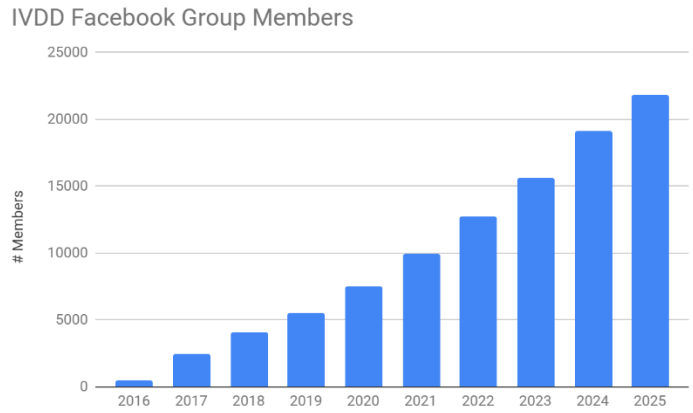
- Dilute colours – know the health risks
- How to teach a Dachshund to stop barking at the front door
- Double Trouble: Can you spot the Double Dapple Dachshund?

The Top 3 most visited pages on the website were:

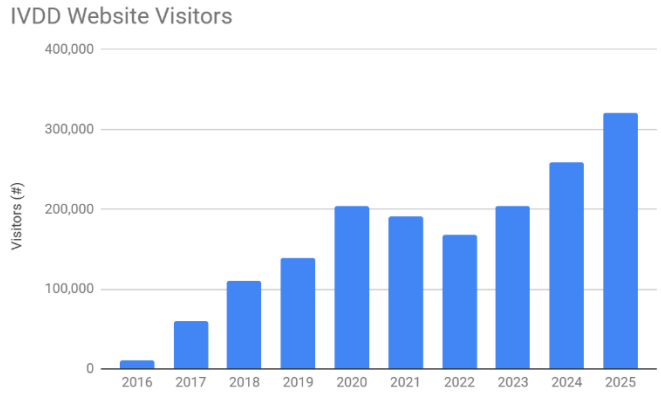
- Body condition and weight
- The bitch's cycle
- Temperament and Behaviour

1,470 people visited our "Tips for new owners" page and 620 visited our "Advice for buyers" page. Overall DHUK website traffic dropped by about 30% in sessions and 29% in unique visitors year-over-year. While engagement was exceptionally strong in 2024, 2025 returned to levels closer to previous years.

Our IVDD Facebook Support Group now has nearly 22,000 members:



Our IVDD website had 321,000 visitors in 2025, up from 259,000 in 2024:



The most visited pages on the IVDD website were:

- Advice on neutering
- What is IVDD?
- Symptoms and Treatment

We also have nearly 2,200 followers of our Instagram page (@dachshundhealthuk) which is managed by Christine Bessio, a Dachshund owner in the USA.

Fundraising

Dachshund Health UK is a registered charity that raises funds to support education, research, and health improvement projects. We are grateful to the many Breed Clubs and individuals who have run fundraising events or have made donations from the sale of products (e.g. books and cards). Details of how to raise funds or to donate can be found at: https://www.dachshundhealth.org.uk/health-fund

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DHUK's priority projects where grants were made during 2024 were:

- Cambridge University Vet School IVDD research
- UK IVDD screening programme subsidies to participants

Our audited accounts are available on the Charity Commission's website but key figures from our most recent report (year-ending December 2024) are shown below:

INCOME:	£
Restricted – IVDD	1429
Unrestricted	3390
Legacy	14172
Total Income	18991
EXPENDITURE:	
Cambridge IVDD Research	5000
IVDD Screening	3900
Eye Screening	849
Operating Expenses	504
Total Expenditure	10253
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	8738

Towards the end of 2024 we were pleased to be informed of a legacy donation made by the late Christine Gibson to DHUK. Christine was a well-liked breeder/owner/exhibitor of Wirehaired Dachshunds who sadly passed way because of cancer. Her memory will live on in the work we are able to do for Dachshunds, through her generous legacy donation.

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