

This is a joint health report presented by the Dachshund Breed Council’s Health Sub-committee and the Trustees of Dachshund Health UK (registered charity).

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Ian J Seath, Chairman, Dachshund Health UK

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Introduction

During 2023 we said goodbye and thank you to Roger Sainsbury who retired as Chairman of both the DBC Health Sub-committee and DHUK. Roger has, however, continued as a committee member and trustee.

Dr Bryony Fossett was appointed as Chairman of the DBC Health Sub-committee and Ian Seath was appointed as Chairman of Trustees for DHUK.

The key health planning activity in 2023 was a review and update of our Breed Health and Conservation Plan (BHCP) with the Royal Kennel Club (RKC). The latest document includes an updated literature review and registration statistics. Our Breed Health and Conservation Plan describes the evidence-base for our priorities in addressing the breed's improvement challenges. This annual report does not repeat the information in the BHCP (which is available at www.dachshundhealth.org.uk/health-plans).

The RKC also supported our education objectives by running 2 health webinars: one on Colour Dilution Alopecia and the other on Intervertebral Disc Disease (IVDD).

We published the results of 2 IVDD surveys, and these are discussed in this report.

The continuing growth in popularity of the breed (Mini Smooths in particular) makes it extremely difficult to reach the thousands of new owners and breeders across the UK. We are grateful to the many Admins of the various national and local Dachshund Facebook Groups for their support in sharing the information we publish.

Our health priorities for 2024 are as follows:

- 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, particularly in relation to the dilute colours that have increased risks of health issues

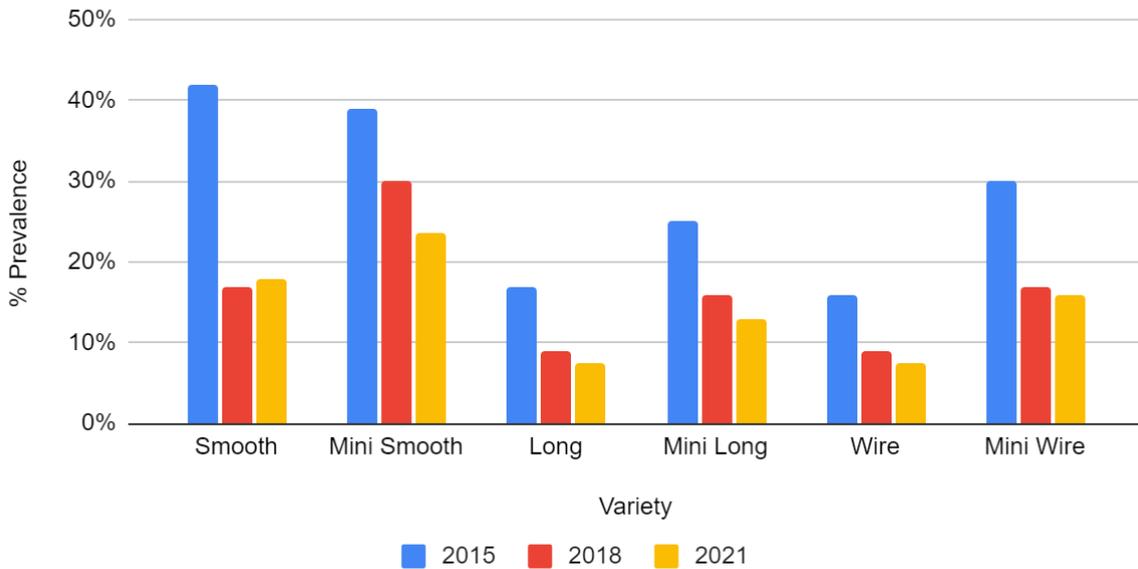
Intervertebral Disc Disease (IVDD)

IVDD is the single most significant health issue affecting the breed, albeit with different prevalence across the 6 UK varieties.

In 2015, our DachsLife Survey identified several lifestyle factors that are associated with an increased risk of IVDD. This has enabled us to focus our communication efforts for breeders, buyers, and owners. At the end of 2016, we launched our IVDD Screening Programme, based on multiple research papers published over the past 30 years. In 2018 and 2021, our DachsLife Surveys collected further data about IVDD prevalence. The chart below summarises the trend we are seeing. It shows a statistically significant reduction in IVDD prevalence in all 6 varieties, for dogs aged 4 and over. N.B., we exclude dogs under 4 years because the typical age of onset is 4-7 years.

Dachshund IVDD Prevalence from 3 breed surveys

(Dogs >3 y.o.)

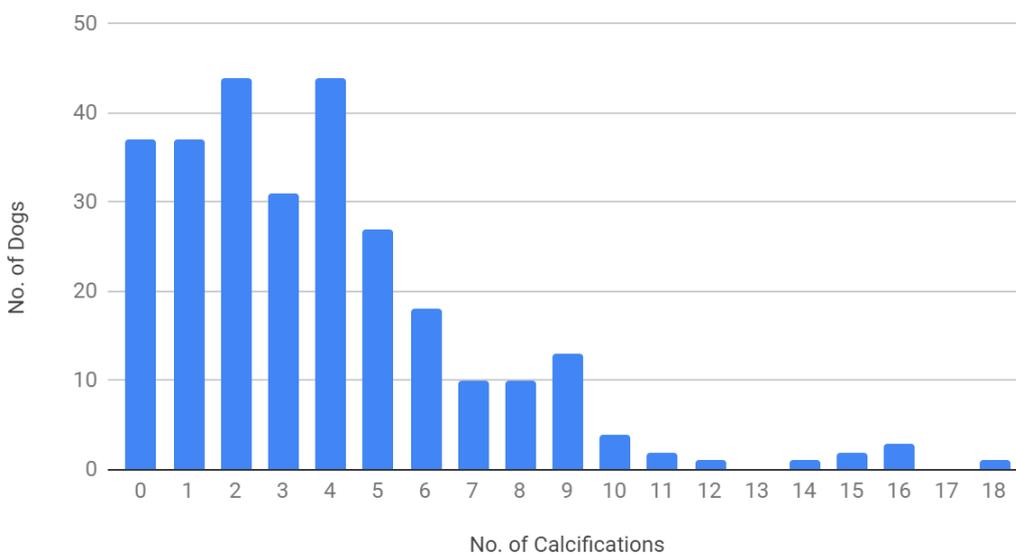


During 2021, the Kennel Club took over the running of our IVDD screening programme. It is now officially recognised by the KC, and they manage a team of UK assessors who are all experienced veterinary surgeons and neurology experts. IVDD screening is now a Recommendation for members of the KC’s Assured Breeder Scheme.

Both the KC and Dachshund Health UK have been offering £100 subsidies to those participating in the screening programme during 2023 and this will continue in 2024. This reduces the cost to an owner to £120.

The chart below shows the numbers of calcifications reported in the 280 dogs screened so far.

No. of Dogs vs No. of Calcifications



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13% of dogs have been Grade 0 (no calcifications), 27% Grade 1 (1-2 calcifications), 27% Grade 2 (3-4) and 33% Grade 3 (more than 4).

Towards the end of 2023 we received details of 2 Nordic IVDD initiatives. In Norway, the breed club and NKK have started a large-scale DNA testing programme to identify the mutation frequency of the CDDY mutation. Their initial results are summarised below:

	Testede	RESULTATER					
		N/N	%	N/CDDY	%	CDDY/CDDY	%
Langhår standard	28	0		4	14.3	24	85.7
Langhår dverg/kanin	30	0		3	10	26	86.7
Stihår standard	8	0		0		8	100.0
Strihår dverg/kanin	3	0		0		3	100.0
Korthår standard	5	0		0		5	100.0
Korthår dverg/kanin	1	0		0		1	100.0
	75						

Testede dachshunder under VDHKs utstilling 28.10.23

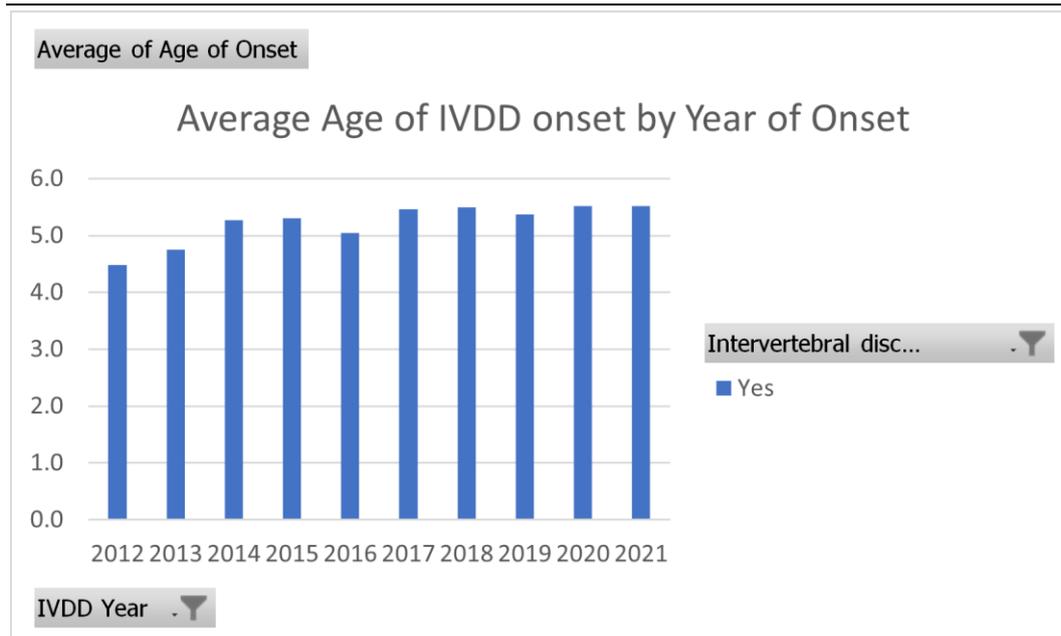
The evidence we have so far in the UK is that the CDDY mutation is homozygous in virtually all Dachshunds. We haven't found a single UK dog that isn't homozygous for this mutation. It is therefore of little use as a means of reducing IVDD. All the published research suggests X-ray screening is the best available tool to breed away from IVDD. This article explains why we do not currently believe CDDY testing will be of significance in reducing IVDD prevalence.

<https://www.dachshund-ivdd.uk/screening-for-ivdd/dna-test-for-ivdd/>

In Finland, the Kennel Club and breed club have published a 15-year IVDD reduction strategy. This emphasises the importance of X-ray screening and encourages DNA testing (CDDY). It also gives guidance on which dogs should be bred from to help reduce IVDD prevalence, whilst recognising the potential dangers of adversely affecting genetic diversity across the breed.

Anecdotally, we have been concerned about the number of relatively young Dachshunds being diagnosed with IVDD. We revisited the data from our DachLife 2021 breed survey and stratified the data into yearly age of onset cohorts. The analysis (from 889 dogs 2012-2021) is shown below. We removed all years where there were fewer than 20 dogs with IVDD. The data are shown by "Year of IVDD onset" rather than "Year of birth". This includes all the IVDD cases diagnosed in each year (incidence) and the average age of the dog at that point.

This analysis shows that age of onset is not decreasing; there is no evidence that dogs are going down with IVDD at a younger age.



IVDD Survey Results 2022-23

In July, we published the results of the 2 IVDD and Lifestyle Surveys which were run at the end of 2022. We received 1869 responses across both surveys, allowing a strong comparison between Dachshunds with IVDD and Dachshunds over 8 years old without IVDD.

The aim of both surveys was to do a comprehensive analysis of various lifestyle factors which affect both groups and to compare the results between them. The survey also looked at each dog's IVDD journey, surgical or conservative, and examined recovery rates and timeframes, and approaches taken to aid recovery. It is important to emphasise the results do not necessarily prove causation, but they may indicate areas needing further consideration and research.

Both surveys were designed and analysed by Sharon Alton (Trustee of DHUK). We are grateful to the Kennel Club who helped distribute the surveys to Dachshund owners.

The Survey Report can be found here:

<https://www.dachshundhealth.org.uk/welcome/ivdd-survey-results-2022-23>

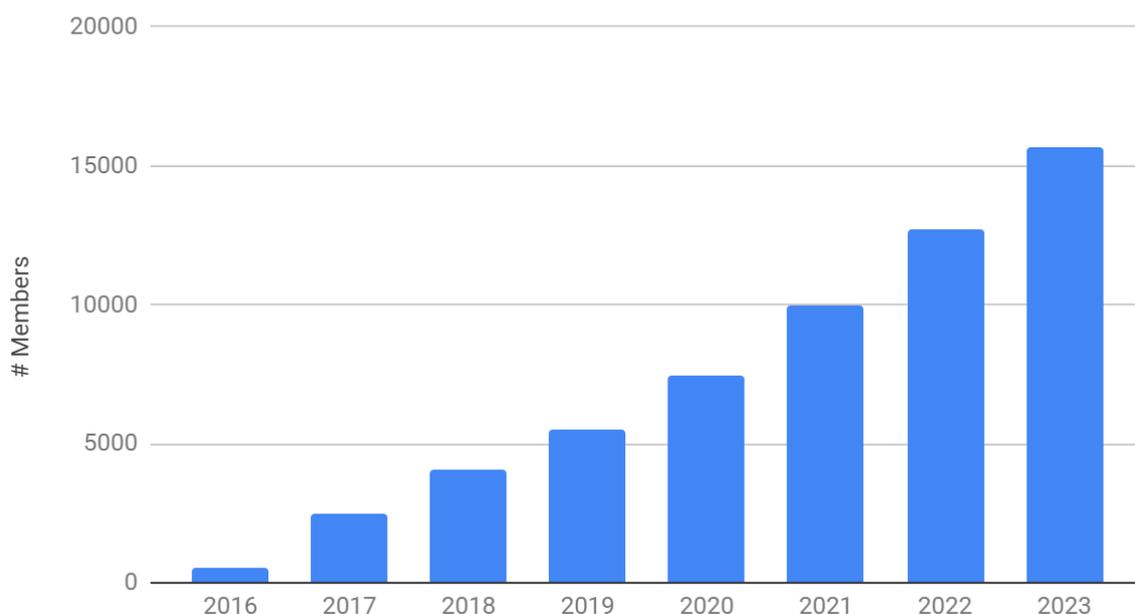
Some of the interesting results included the following:

- As reflected by previous research, there was a statistically significantly higher proportion of Dachshunds with IVDD who had been neutered under 2 years of age than those who were left entire
- In the 2 surveys, Dachshunds that wore a harness were twice as likely to be affected by IVDD than those walked in collars
- When comparing behavioural issues, it was noted that there was an increased number of behavioural issues with dogs that went on to suffer with IVDD

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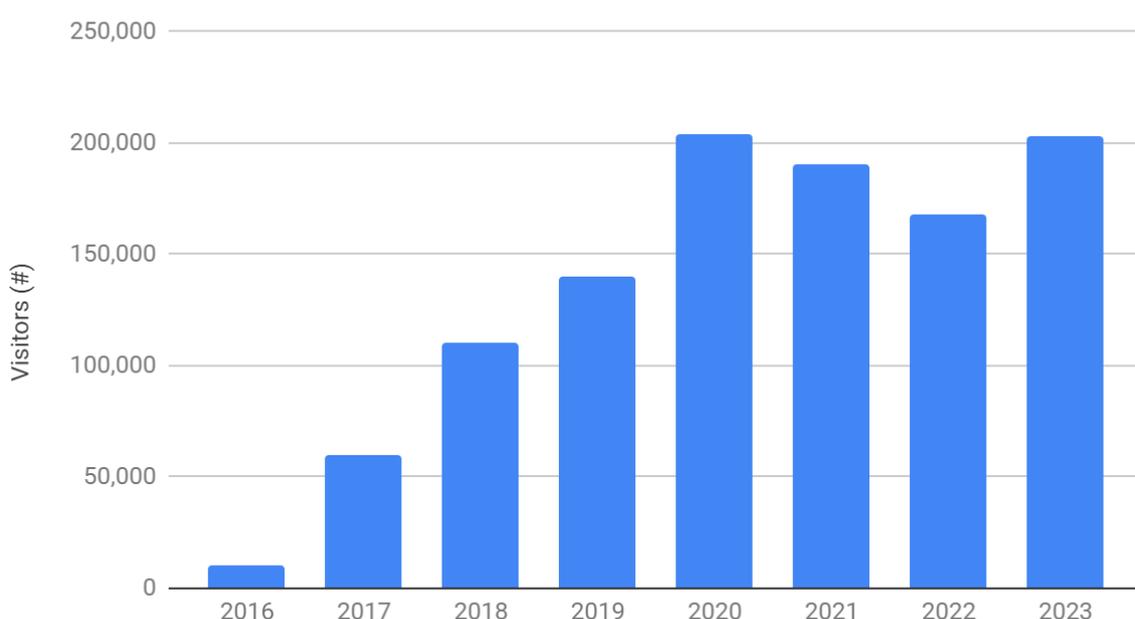
The Dachshund Health UK IVDD support group on Facebook continues to provide advice to owners whose dogs are affected by IVDD, as well as providing information to owners on how to reduce risks. On average, there were 5-10 new cases reported to the group each week. We are particularly grateful to Charlotte Baldwin and Elaine Brechin who manage the [Dedicated to Dachshunds with IVDD Group](#) for the huge amount of time they put into supporting members of the IVDD Group.

IVDD Facebook Group Members



Our IVDD website (www.dachshund-ivdd.uk) had just over 200,000 visitors in 2023 and the most visited page was our advice on neutering.

IVDD Website Visitors



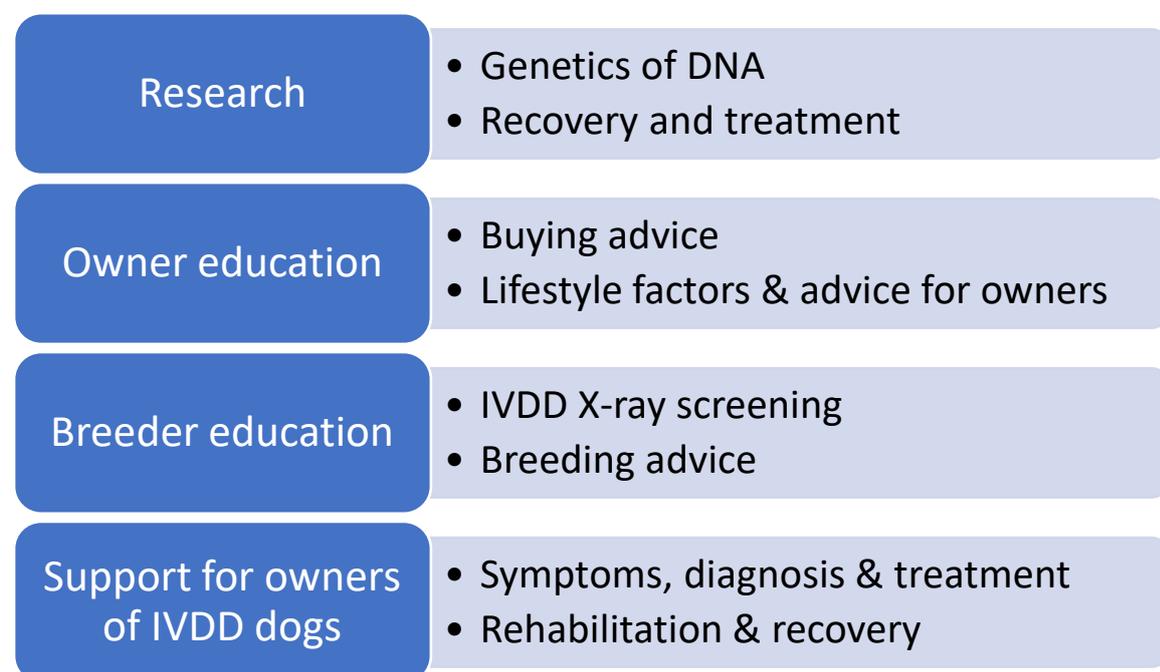
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The most significant research that we are currently supporting is being carried out at Cambridge University Vet School. They have investigated the recovery of paralysed dachshunds (Grades 4 & 5) using conservative treatments. We have run 3 webinars with the Cambridge team, and you can find these here: <https://www.dachshund-ivdd.uk/research/cambridge-research/> The team has found high recovery rates at 12 weeks in dogs treated conservatively. These encouraging results offer great hope to owners of affected dogs who choose not to opt for surgery. We look forward to seeing this research published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Dachshund Health UK is currently funding a research study at Cambridge Vet School to identify other genes associated with IVDD. We need to raise £15,000 to cover 3 years for a PhD student project.

Our IVDD Reduction Strategy

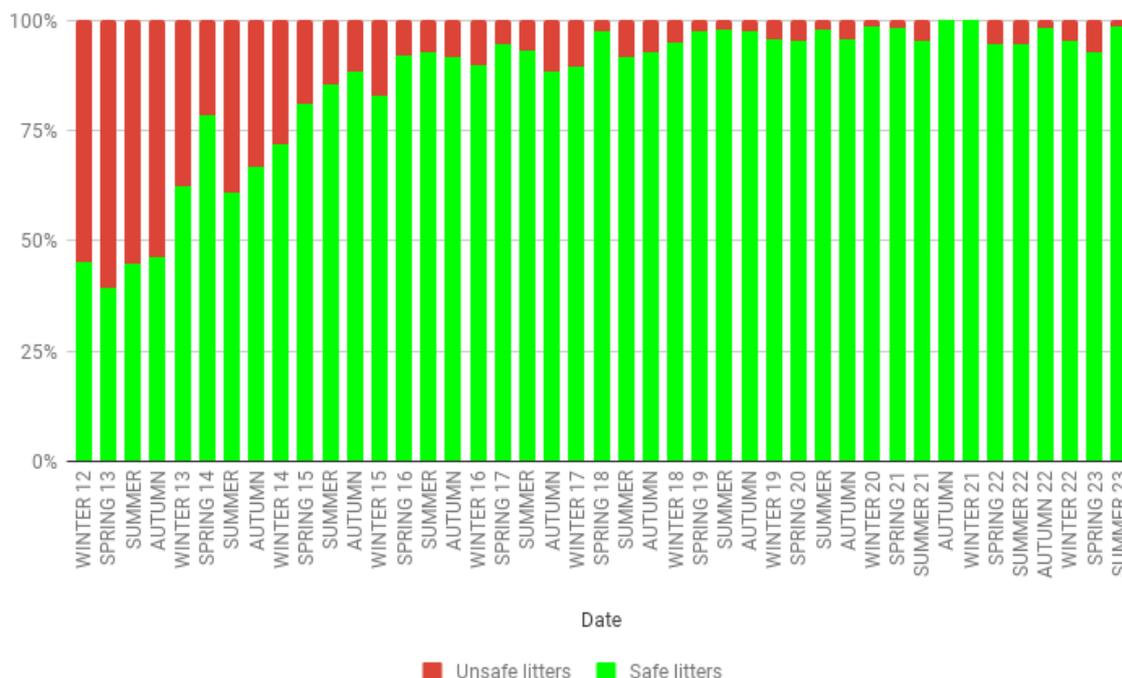
Our IVDD Reduction Strategy has the following strands:



Lafora Disease

A DNA test has been available for more than 10 years and screening is a Requirement for members of the KC's Assured Breeder Scheme. In 2023 we continued to see a low proportion (4% in 2023) of litters that potentially included "Affected" puppies.

Mini Wire Dachshund Lafora Safe and Unsafe Litters



Read more about Lafora disease here: <https://www.dachshundhealth.org.uk/lafora-disease>

Eye Disease

Clinical eye screening is a Recommendation for members of the KC's Assured Breeder Scheme breeding for Miniature Longhaired Dachshunds. Our advice is that it is good practice for all varieties to be eye screened prior to breeding.

All the Miniature varieties also require (as a Requirement of the ABS) DNA testing for cord1 PRA.

In the Mini Longs and, to a lesser extent, the Standard Longs, Distichiasis is a condition of concern. Prevalence in our 2018 survey was 2.5% and 1% respectively. In our 2013-14 clinical surveys, this was a condition of clinical concern in 13% of Mini Longs.

Dachshund Health UK and the Dachshund Club subsidised an eye screening day in November. Professor Peter Bedford screened 51 Dachshunds. Only 1 dog was reported as having any concerns: a minor case of Distichiasis.

Read more about eye disease here: <https://www.dachshundhealth.org.uk/eye-disease>

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Buyer and owner education

The main opportunities to engage with buyers and owners were via our social media channels and at Discover Dogs which was held at Crufts in March. The Crufts event was organised by the Midland Dachshund Club, and we were thrilled that the stand was awarded best in the Hound Group and reserve best in show.

We are grateful to all the volunteers who took their dogs to Crufts over the 4 days and to Ian Smith who organised the event on behalf of the breed and who has now stepped down for a well-deserved retirement.



We have a QR Code poster that provides a direct link to our most frequently asked questions.



Our health website (www.dachshundhealth.org.uk) had 110,000 unique visitors in 2023 (up from 85,000 in 2022), with 143,000 site sessions.

During 2023, we published an updated Buyer's Guide which is available here:

<https://www.dachshundhealth.org.uk/welcome/download-our-updated-dachshund-buyer-s-guide>

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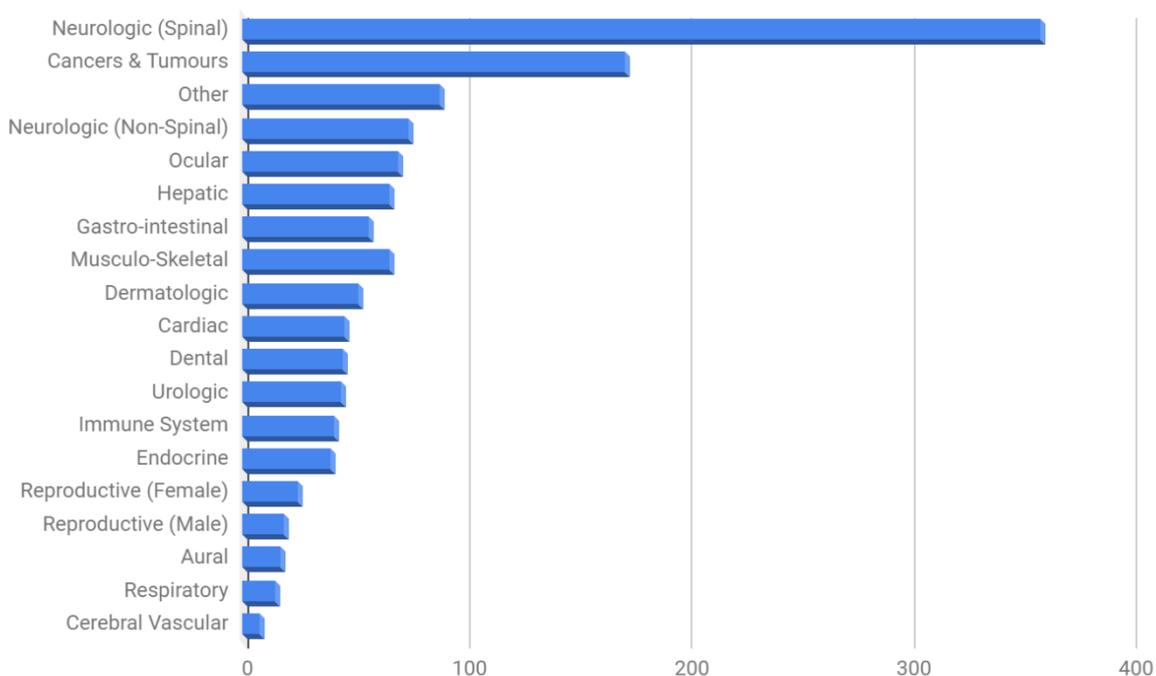
We are grateful to Christine Bessio (from the USA) who manages our Instagram account @dachshundhealthuk. She has increased our followers to over 2000 (up from 1800 at the end of 2022).

Ongoing health monitoring

Owners can report health conditions and causes of death at our health reporting webpage: <https://www.dachshundhealth.org.uk/submit-a-report>

We received 38 reports during 2023, bringing the total to 1117 in 14 years (39 in 2022, 66 in 2020). While this is a relatively low response rate, it does provide us with some useful data on a regular basis, particularly on mortality and longevity.

No. of Reports by Condition Category



- Death reported as “Old Age” – Average = 15.1 (Max. = 19)
- Death from Cardiac conditions – Average = 10.3
- Death from IVDD – Average = 5.6
- Death from Lafora Disease – Average = 9.4
- Death from Epilepsy – Average = 8.7
- Death from Cancers and Tumours – Average = 9.7

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Breed Watch

The KC's Breed Watch scheme is an early warning system for judges at dog shows to identify any emerging concerns. Judges at championship shows can submit a report to the KC to share their views on visible points of concern.

All 6 varieties of Dachshund are in Breed Watch Category 2. The points of concern are:

- Significantly underweight
- Sore eyes or excessive tearing
- Incorrect hindquarter movement/ unsound movement

Read more about Breed Watch here:

<https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/events-and-activities/dog-showing/judging-dog-shows/breed-watch/>

The KC will be updating the Breed Watch Points of Concern in 2024 and they ran a webinar for judges, breeders, and exhibitors, in February 2023. The recording is here:

https://youtu.be/1z_WlCA5DhA?si=W-K4eaoFBx8yyIP0

Our Watch List

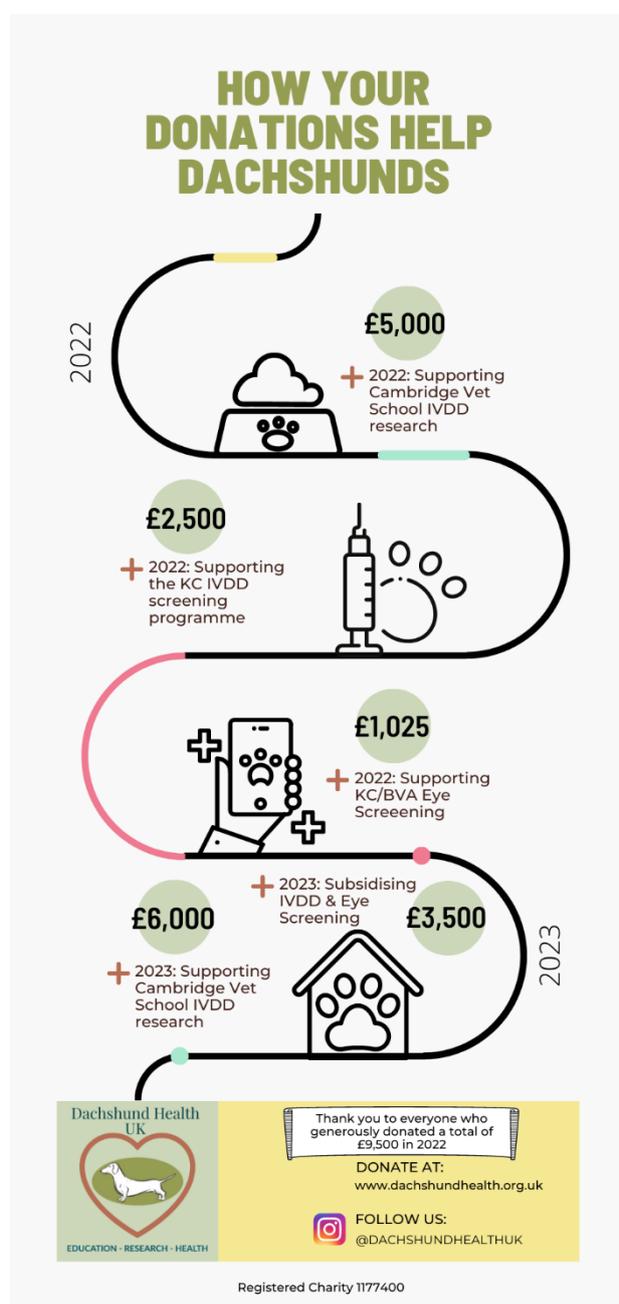
In addition to our priority conditions, we have a Watch List of other conditions which may be of concern if their prevalence increases, or further scientific evidence emerges about their relevance and severity in our breed. Currently, we are watching:

- Pes Varus (particularly, in the miniature varieties)
 - More information at <https://www.dachshundhealth.org.uk/pes-varus>
- Cardiac conditions (particularly Mitral Valve Disease)
 - DachsLife 2018: Smooth 6%, Long 8%, Wire 12%, MS 2%, ML 5%, MW 3%
- Lymphoma – early-onset in Mini Longs
 - 40% of all ML cancer cases reported and 4 times as many cancer cases than the other 5 varieties (ref. <https://www.dachshundhealth.org.uk/dachslife-2018>)
- Epilepsy – mid-age onset in Mini Longs
 - 4% prevalence in MLs 2012, 2015 and 2018 surveys (~3-4 times more common than in the other 5 varieties) – cases can be reported here:
https://docs.google.com/forms/viewform?hl=en_GB&id=1WC2-IEFwjXSgBP7p4G1UMM19RQkCboRrY3VEQE_g_8
- Colour Dilution Alopecia (an issue in dilute coloured Dachshunds)
 - More information in the KC webinar here:
<https://youtu.be/EUFzcBRgheY?si=EBXGmd7n6Knd3Nka>

Dachshund Health UK is a registered charity that raises funds to support education, research, and health improvement projects. We are grateful to the many people who have run fundraising events or have made donations from the sale of products (e.g. books and cards). Our 2022-23 summary is shown in the infographic below. Details of how to raise funds or to donate can be found at: <https://www.dachshundhealth.org.uk/health-fund>

DHUK's priority projects where grants were made during 2023 were:

- Cambridge University Vet School IVDD research
- UK IVDD screening programme subsidies to participants
- Eye screening subsidies at the Dachshund Club championship show



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Our websites

www.dachshundbreedcouncil.org.uk

www.dachshundhealth.org.uk

www.dachshund-ivdd.uk

Dachshund Breed Council Health Committee

Charlotte Baldwin (Pet Advisor)

Elaine Brechin (Pet Advisor)

Bryony Fossett (Chairman)

Dawn Norton

Roger Sainsbury

Ian Seath

Judy Squires

Aimee Thomas (Pet Advisor)

Dachshund Health UK Trustees

Sharon Alton

Katherine Herrington (Treasurer)

Gill Key

Anne Moore

Daniel Roberts

Roger Sainsbury

Ian Seath (Chairman & Secretary)