



2022 English Setter Health Survey

Summary Report

by the English Setter Health Coordinator



Summary

- The English Setter Health Survey ran from November 2021 to April 2022. A total of 1,112 individual responses were received. This represents the largest survey on UK English Setter health for thirty years. The health committee would like to thank the Kennel Club for their help and support to undertake the survey and reporting.
- English Setter registrations in the last 10 years were 2,816 (2012-2021); this survey represents a significant proportion of the English Setters currently alive in the UK.
- Analysis has been made in this report with the 1991 health Survey (1,846 adult dogs) and the 1993 Skin and Ear Survey (714 dogs) where possible. However, it should be noted the methodology in terms of sampling is different between the surveys; the 1991 and 1993 surveys were largely of ESA members. The 1991 survey included litters and puppies bred by breeders. The 2022 was online and went to all individuals recorded as the owner of an English Setter by the Kennel Club. The survey link was also shared on all breed club websites.
- It should be noted that not all owners completed all questions in the 2022 survey, therefore the number of dogs affected and not affected is shown in each category of the report.
- Inevitably, there will have been some bias with owners with affected dogs more likely to have completed the survey than those with healthy dogs, but the number of responses indicates that the breed has some commonly occurring conditions that continue to be very prevalent within the breed— ear infections, skin conditions and digestive conditions being the top three.
- The incidence of ear conditions appears to have doubled, with 50% of respondents reporting conditions in 2022, compared with 1991. The data suggests a 128% increase in prevalence of skin conditions between 1991 and 2022. The 1993 skin survey showed that those animals living in the house were more likely to be affected by skin conditions. As the 2022 shows an increase in the proportion of dogs living in the house for all or part the time, this may be a contributing factor.



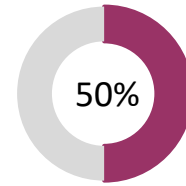
Summary of 2022 survey results

- Of the 1,122 English Setters the median age was five years.
- The breakdown by sex was 557 males and 555 females; 652 (58.6%) were entire and 458 (41.2%) were neutered.
- The median (most often) age at which English Setters start showing signs of the main conditions is 2-3 years of age.
- Neutered animals were statistically more likely to be affected by skin conditions and hypothyroidism than unneutered dogs.
- Orange Beltons were shown to be significantly more likely to have ear conditions than other colours, as well as neutered animals across all coat colours.
- Skin conditions whether of the ear, body or digestive system account for the largest proportion of conditions, with many dogs being affected in more than one area
- Allergies to grass, mites and pollen were the main contributors to skin conditions.
- Hypothyroidism was only report in 21 of 955 responses. 2.2% of the responses, which suggest the prevalence may be lower than expected.
- English Setters start reporting joint conditions at 6 years of age.
- Grain free kibble (22%) is the most often fed food, followed by tinned food (19%), cooked meat (14%) , grain included kibble (14%), and raw meat (11%)
- Of the meat types fed; Chicken, fish and beef were the top three.
- Most dogs were housed indoors during the day and night

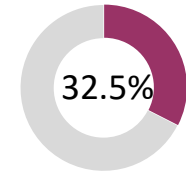


2022 Top 5 Conditions reported

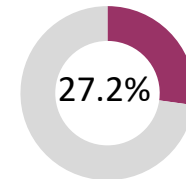
Dogs may have had multiple conditions and so are counted in each category. The number of respondents to each question is set out below



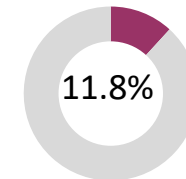
Ear conditions – 495/990 dogs affected



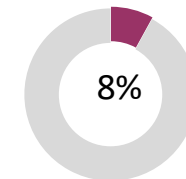
Skin and/or coat – 344/1,058 dogs affected



Digestive – 262/964 dogs affected



Muscle, bone or joint – 111/943 dogs affected



Reproductive – 75/938 dogs affected



Ear Conditions

- Of the 990 responses, 495 (50.0%) answered “Yes” to suffering with an ear condition and 495 (50.0%) answered “No”
- The median age that affected dogs started to experience the clinical signs associated with their ear condition(s) was two years of age (min: less than one year, max: 12 years). In this study sample, older dogs (over five years old) were significantly more likely to be affected by ear conditions than younger dogs (under five years old)
- The total number of individual ear conditions reported was 653. Of these, the most commonly reported condition was recurrent ear infections, which affected 22.2% of the study sample (145 of 653). This was followed by excessive ear wax (19.9%), otitis externa (18.5%), infrequent ear infections (17.8%), and otitis media (12.1%).

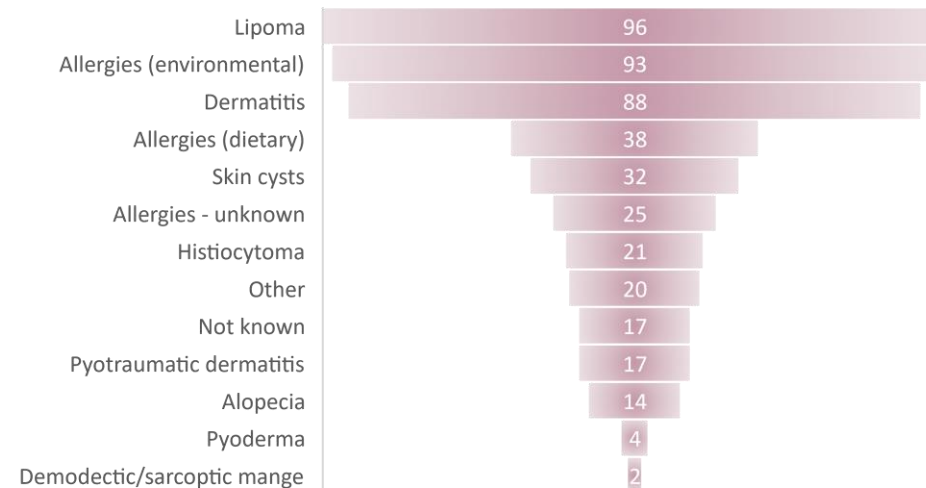
Specific condition	Number affected	Percentage
Recurrent ear infections	145	22.2%
Excessive ear wax	130	19.9%
Otitis externa	121	18.5%
Infrequent ear infections	116	17.8%
Otitis media	79	12.1%
Not known	35	5.4%
Other	27	4.1%
TOTAL	653	



Skin and coat conditions

- 344 (32.5%) were reported as having skin conditions and 714 (67.5%) not. In this study sample, neutered dogs were significantly more likely to be affected by skin and/or coat conditions
- The median age that affected dogs started to experience the clinical signs associated with their skin and/or coat condition(s) was three years of age (min: less than one year, max: 13 years).
- In this study sample, older dogs (over five years old) were significantly more likely to be affected by skin and/or coat conditions than younger dogs (under five years old)
- the frequency of their dog's clinical signs, out of 457 responses, 211 (46.2%) owners answered 'continuous', 161 (35.2%) answered 'intermittent', and 85 (18.6%) answered 'one-off'.

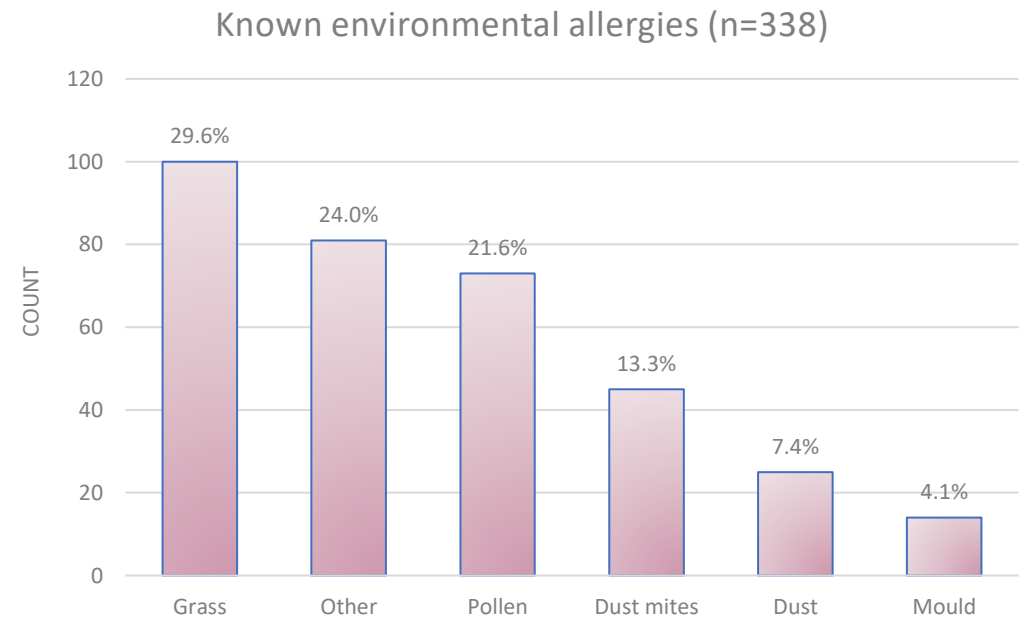
Reported Skin conditions





Skin and coat conditions

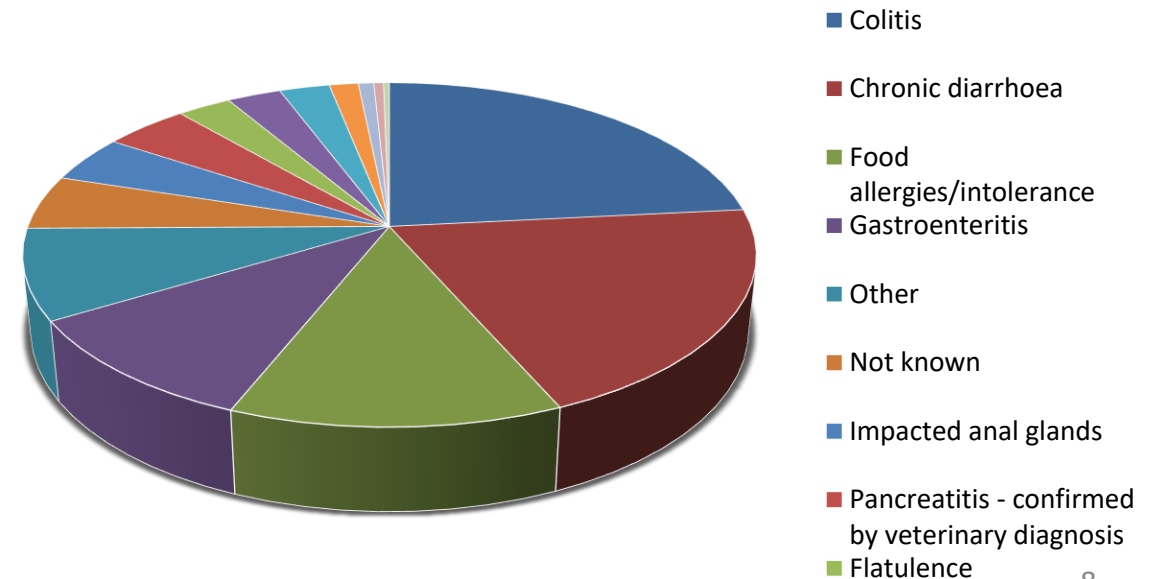
- 220 dogs were reported to have known skin allergies; several dogs had more than one allergy and hence the number of reported known allergies is 338
- The most common answers to “other” for known environmental allergies not already listed in the survey were: storage mites/ house mites/ grain mites/ forage mites/ dust mites (n=12), seasonal allergies (n=6), and tree pollen (n=6).





Digestive conditions

- From 964 responses, 262 (27.2%) reported being affected with digestive conditions and 702 (72.8%) were not. In this study sample, neutered dogs were significantly more likely to be affected by digestive conditions
- The median age that affected dogs started to experience the clinical signs associated with their digestive condition(s) was two years of age (min: less than one year, max: over 15 years). In this study sample, older dogs (over five years old) were significantly more likely to be affected by digestive conditions than younger dogs
- Of the individual digestive conditions reported was 389. Of these, the most commonly reported condition was colitis, which affected 23.4% of the study sample (91 of 389). This was followed by chronic diarrhoea (20.1%), food allergies/intolerance (12.6%), gastroenteritis (10.3%), and other (8.5%).





Analysis to previous health studies

Whilst direct comparisons with previous surveys aren't possible due to the different survey methodologies, framing of questions, and main respondents. It is helpful to make some analysis and comparison with previous studies.

The table on the next slide shows that ear infections remain the top condition, and the prevalence would appear to have increased significantly over the last 30 years. Additionally, Skin conditions would seem to have increased by 128% between 1991 and 2022. The 1991 survey was aimed more towards breeders which may have reflected the higher incidence of uterine inertia, and mammary growths; whereas reproductive conditions accounted for only 8% of conditions in 2022.

The increased prevalence of ear and skin conditions could in part be explained by the increased number of dogs being kept indoors for most or part of the day. The 1993 skin survey showed a correlation between those kept outdoors being less likely to be affected with these conditions than those living indoors. The increase in those being kept indoors is most likely due to the number of people keeping a smaller number of dogs than 30 years ago, when there were a larger number of big kennels keeping English Setters and these were more likely to be housed outside. Other factors such as a reduced gene pool and an increasing inbreeding coefficient are likely to be contributing factors.



Analysis to previous health studies

Top conditions 2022 v 1991

2022	1991
Ear Infections 50%	Ear Infections 25.1%
Skin and/or coat 32.5%	Mammary growths 23.5%
Digestive 27.2%	Uterine Inertia 18.1%
Muscle, bone or joint 11.8 %	Skin 14.8%
Housing Indoors Day: 54.2% Indoors Night: 95.5% Outdoors Day: 6% Outdoors Night: 2.5% Both Day: 39.1% Both Night:2.0%	Housing Indoors 63% Outdoors 21% Both 16%