



American Spaniel Club Foundation

Cocker Spaniel Health Survey

July 2023

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## **American Spaniel Club Foundation**

The American Spaniel Club Foundation is a nonprofit 501.c.3 organization with the mission of bettering the life of Cocker Spaniels through research, education, and rescue. The ASC Foundation works in three areas: health, education, and rescue. The American Spaniel Club Foundation conducted a Health Survey on Cocker Spaniels. The intent of the survey was to identify health related issues that may be experienced by our Cocker companions. Understanding the health issues faced by our Cocker Spaniels and their owners will allow the ASC Foundation to focus research and other efforts with a goal of improving the health of our Cockers.

## **Cocker Spaniel Health Survey**

A general list of Canine health issues was used to construct this survey, not necessarily those unique to Cockers obtained from the AKC-CHF list of research grants and veterinary publications. Similar surveys by other parent breed club were reviewed for information as the survey was constructed.

We would like to recognize and thank the following Cocker Spaniel Breeders that completed the initial versions of the survey and provided valuable feedback that improved the quality of the survey prior to final distribution:

- Lindy Bennett, Life Member American Spaniel Club
- Joan Stallard, Life Member American Spaniel Club

The American Kennel Club assisted the ASC Foundation by distributing a link to the survey to anyone that had registered a Cocker Spaniel with the American Kennel Club in the last approximately 20 years.

We would also like to recognize and thank the following AKC personnel for their assistance:

- Monica Henderson, Program Manager, AKC DNA Research & Development
- Dr. Claire Wiley, VMD, DACVIM, Executive Director of the AKC DNA Program
- Mark Dunn, Executive Vice President, American Kennel Club
- Other AKC staff members that assisted on our survey

The initial distribution of the Survey via the American Spaniel Club email chat, Facebook pages, and peer to peer share resulted in approximately 350 responses. After the AKC email campaign, we reach our final total of 1558 survey responses. As you can see, the AKC email campaign significantly increased the number of responders. The accuracy of any survey is directly related to the number of responses received.

## Results

A total of 1,558 survey responses were received. Data on 3,425 males and 4480 bitches was received for a total of 7905 individual Cockers. The results are presented by general areas or conditions in the same manner that the survey was constructed.

Information is provided in two separate areas:

- First is the percentage of Cocker owners that have had a Cocker that was diagnosed or afflicted with a given condition. For example, 41.90% of the reporting Cocker owners have experienced an Immune System issue with at least one of their cockers. This may be a simple food allergy or a more serious condition.
- The second area breaks down each of the individual conditions and provides the number of affected males and females with that condition. For example, under Immune System conditions, a total of 207 Cockers were reported as afflicted with Autoimmune Hemolytic Anemia – IMHA. This breaks down as 71 males, 81 females, and 55 without information on whether it was an affected male or female. 207 afflicted out of a reporting population of 7,905 yields a 2.62% of all reporting cockers as afflicted with IMHA. The final row for each general area shows the total number of males and females afflicted for a given area such as Immune System issues. Since a single dog or bitch could have more than one Immune system issue, these final rows should be viewed as an upper limit as opposed to an actual total number of afflicted cockers.

The results for all areas are provided in a similar manner. A category of “Other” was included in the survey. Conditions reported as “Other” were reviewed to determine if the condition fit into any other Survey categories or conditions. The results of those categories or conditions were adjusted accordingly. The remaining issues or conditions are captured at the end of the survey as “Other” with the exception of some interesting conditions such as excessive happiness, excessive friendliness, hates grooming, exceptional sense of smell and night vision, very loyal and loving, and grub hound. Those conditions are not included in the results except as provided here.

Many of the comments provided by the participants could be valuable to researchers conducting future studies. The comments include information about the conditions, courses of treatment, ultimate outcomes, related cockers afflicted, etc. Many respondents spent considerable time completing their survey.

We would like to thank all survey participants. Your decision to participate will aid the American Spaniel Club Foundation as they work to improve the quality of life for our Cocker companions. Thank you

The survey is closed. There are no current plans to reopen the survey to collect additional data. Although it will take some time to distribute, an email link to the survey results will be provided to all survey participants.

## **What is next?**

The Foundation is already committed to several research projects including our standing commitment to the identification of cataract markers. We intend to use the results of this survey to evaluate new potential and current health research in light of the need for the breed. We hope that by working with other Spaniel breed Foundations we might be able to source breed-specific research for a particular issue or find general programs we can accelerate with our joint funding. Additionally, we expect to factor into our decisions not only the prevalence of a health issue but its impact on the quality of life of a Cocker and its impact financially and emotionally on the family owning that affected dog. These are not easy factors to consider but the Foundation is committed to considering these continually in our funding decisions. Disease research is not always a winning bet and failures are expected. All research requires funding and supportive DNA from breeders and owners of Cockers. As we move into the future, we hope for continued financial strength through legacy giving and contributions of the Cocker fancy as well as the support of breeders and owners in participating with their dogs in various studies as required.

## **Final Comments**

If you have questions, please email the questions to [askthefoundation@gmail.com](mailto:askthefoundation@gmail.com). Since we are all volunteers involved in a variety of activities, please excuse any delay in receiving your response. We will respond.

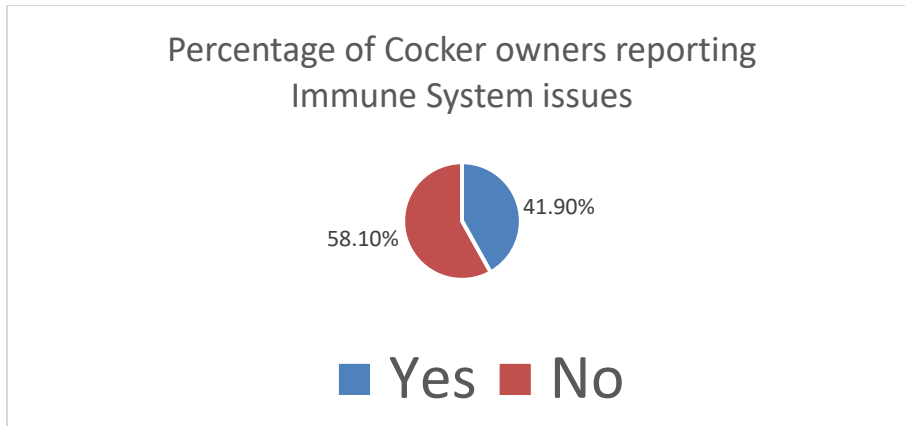
Thank you again to all that participated.

**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by an Immune System Conditions?**

**Immune System Conditions such as:**

Autoimmune Hemolytic Anemia IMHA, Immune Thrombocytopenia IMTP, Flea Allergy, Atopic (general itching), Food Allergy, and other Immune System issues.

**Results**



Immune System Conditions by Issue and percentage of Cockers affected:

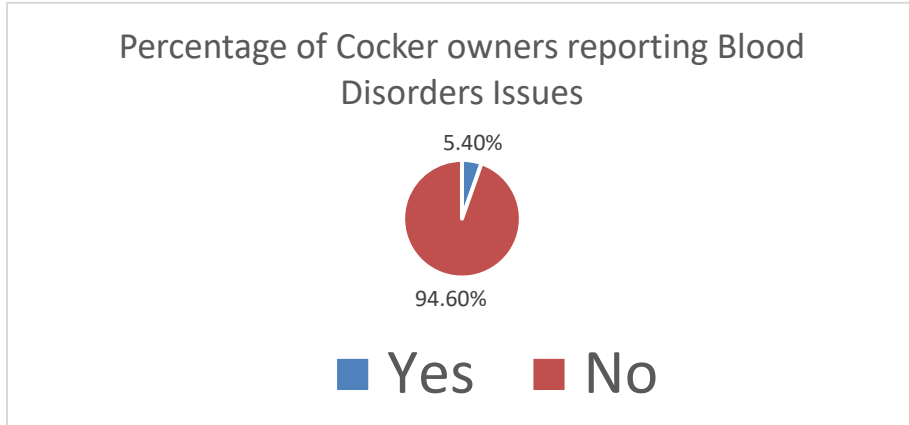
Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Autoimmune Hemolytic Anemia IMHA	71	81	55	207	2.62%
Immune Thrombocytopenia IMTP	10	34	25	69	0.87%
Flea Allergy	23	49	39	111	1.40%
Food Allergy	158	169	136	464	5.85%
Other Immune issues including general itching	109	117	132	358	4.53%
Total immune system response issue Cockers reported	371	450	385	1208	15.28%

**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by a Blood Disorders?**

**Blood Disorders such as:**

Von Willebrand, Bernard Soulier, others Blood Issues

Results



Blood Disorders by Issue and percentage of all Cockers affected:

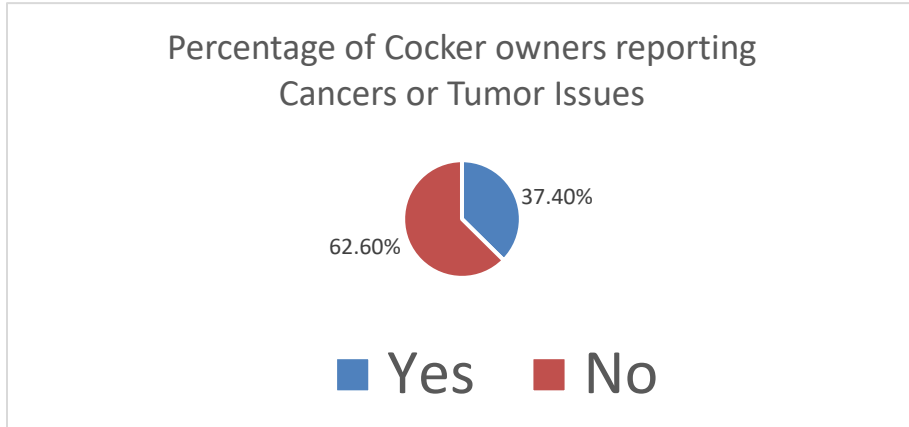
Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Von Willebrand	2	0	0	2	0.02%
Bernard Soulier	0	1	0	1	0.01%
Anemia	0	3	4	7	0.09%
Other Blood issues	1	1	0	2	0.02%
Total Blood Disorders Cockers Reported	3	5	4	12	0.15%

**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by Cancer or Tumors?**

**Cancers and Tumors such as:**

Mammary Tumors, Ovarian Cancer, Testicular Cancer, Prostate Cancer, Leukemia, Lymphoma, Hemangiosarcoma, Skin Cancer Melanoma, Mast Cell Tumors, Sarcoma, and other Cancers/Tumors

**Results**



**Cancers by Issue and percentage of Cockers affected:**

Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Mammary Tumors	4	118	64	186	2.4%
Ovarian Cancer	N/A	21	0	21	0.27%
Testicular Cancer	10	N/A	N/A	10	0.13%
Prostate Cancer	6	N/A	N/A	6	0.01%
Leukemia	0	3	1	4	0.01%
Skin Cancer Melanoma	20	18	7	45	0.57%
Hemangiosarcoma	25	22	11	58	0.73%
Mast Cell Tumors	44	61	54	159	2.01%
Sarcoma	15	21	9	45	0.57%
Other Cancers or tumors – various body parts and organs including Lipomas	123	123	91	338	4.27%
<b>Total Cancer affected Cockers reported</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>872</b>	<b>11.03%</b>

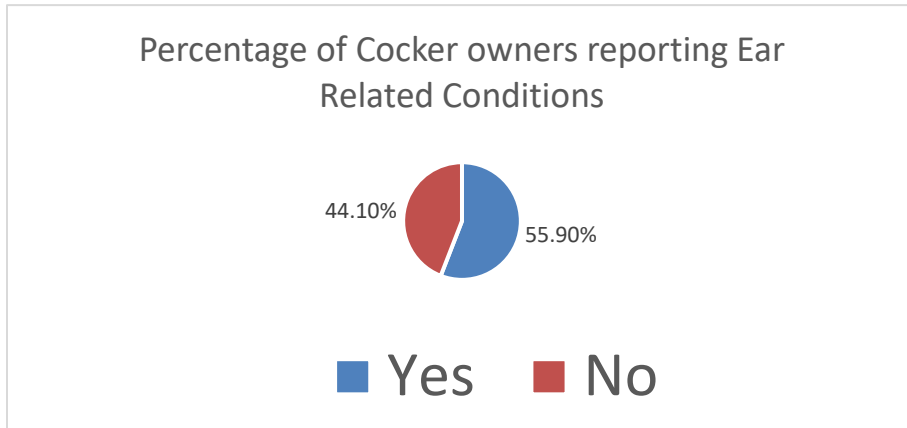
**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by an Ear Related condition?**

Ear related conditions would include hearing loss, infections, discharges, and inflammation.

Ear related conditions such as:

Otitis Externa, Otitis Interna, Ear ablation, Deafness and other Ear Conditions

Results



Ear Related Conditions by Issue and percentage of Cockers affected:

Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Otitis Externa	247	274	273	794	10.04%
Otitis Interna	214	248	265	727	9.20%
Ear Ablation	44	48	49	141	1.78%
Deafness	255	248	160	663	8.39%
Yeast Infections	44	57	21	122	1.54%
Other – majority reported chronic ear infections	95	78	61	234	2.96%
Total Cockers affected by ear conditions	899	953	829	2682	33.91%

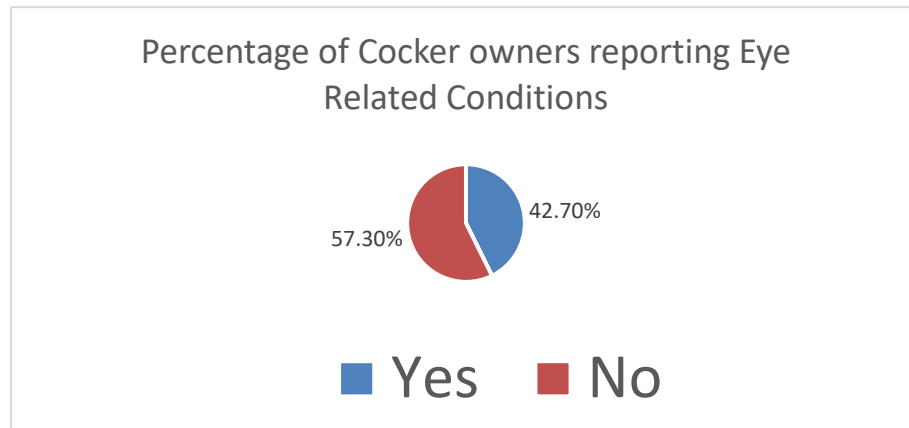


**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by an Eye related condition?**

**Conditions affecting the Eyes such as:**

Cataracts – Bilateral, Cataracts – Asymmetrical, Juvenile Cataracts (< 8 years) – Bilateral, Juvenile, Cataracts (<8 years) – Asymmetrical, Entropion, Ectropion, Distichiasis - extra eyelashes, Corneal Ulcers, Glaucoma, MDR - Multidrug Resistant Mutation, SARDS , PRA, Corneal Dystrophy, Cherry Eye, Keratoconjunctivitis sicca, Retinal Folds, Lens Luxation, Tears - blocked or absence of tear ducts, and other Eye Conditions.

**Results**



**Eye Related Conditions by Issue and percentage of Cockers affected:**

Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Cataracts – Bilateral	48	75	37	160	2.02%
Cataracts – Asymmetrical	144	215	133	492	6.22%
Juvenile Cataracts (< 8 years) – Bilateral	38	67	41	146	1.85%
Juvenile, Cataracts (<8 years) – Asymmetrical	19	40	15	74	0.94%
Entropion	3	20	5	28	0.35%
Ectropion	2	10	5	17	0.22%
Distichiasis - extra eyelashes	*See Below	*See Below	*See Below	*See Below	*See Below Est >70%
Corneal Ulcers,	49	63	20	132	1.67%
Glaucoma	81	155	56	292	3.69%

American Spaniel Club Foundation – Cocker Health Survey Results

Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
MDR - Multidrug Resistant Mutation	3	1	0	4	0.05%
SARDS - Sudden acquired retinal degeneration syndrome	6	12	8	26	0.33%
PRA - Progressive retinal atrophy	9	10	9	28	0.35%
Corneal Dystrophy	10	7	6	23	0.29%
Cherry Eye	240	228	232	700	8.86%
Keratoconjunctivitis sicca	43	37	32	112	1.42%
Retinal Folds	24	27	68	119	1.51%
Lens Luxation	10	24	5	39	0.49%
Tears - blocked or absence of tear ducts	43	87	38	168	2.23%
Dry Eye	9	24	20	53	0.67%
Other Eye Conditions	49	41	24	113	1.41%
Total Cockers affected by Eye conditions other than Distichiasis	830	1143	755	2728	34.51%

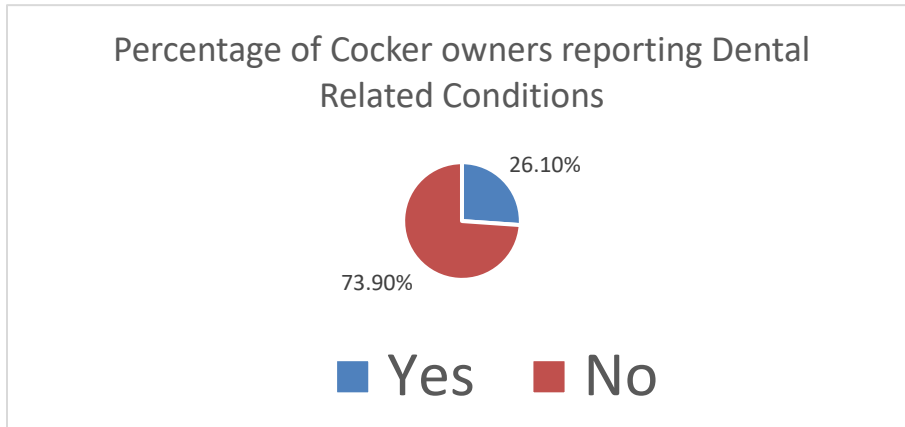
\* - Distichiasis – Many respondents reported all or most of their Cockers have Distichiasis with many people reporting little or no impact on the life of their Cockers. Best estimate - >70% of all Cockers are affected by Distichiasis.

**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by a Dental related condition?**

**Dental Conditions such as:**

Gum Disease, Undershot Bite, Overshot Bite, Undersized/Missing teeth, CUPS - Chronic Ulcerative, Paradental Stomatitis, other Dental Conditions.

**Results**



Dental Related Conditions by Issue and percentage of Cockers affected:

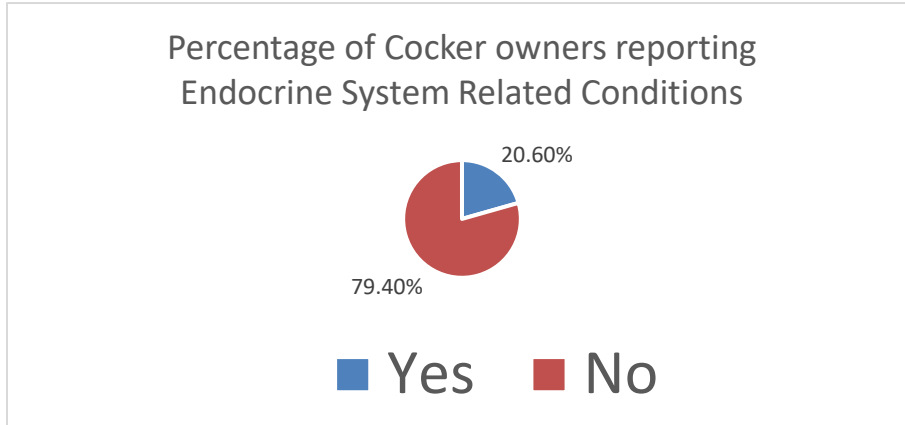
Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Gum Disease	98	138	116	352	4.45%
Undershot Bite	67	80	46	193	2.44%
Overshot Bite	23	26	24	73	0.92%
Undersized/Missing teeth	12	21	12	45	0.57%
CUPS - Chronic Ulcerative, Paradental Stomatitis,	7	3	5	15	0.19%
Other Dental Conditions including bad breath, abscess, excess tarter.	67	70	76	213	2.69%
<b>Total Cockers affected by Dental conditions</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>891</b>	<b>11.27%</b>

**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by an Endocrine System condition?**

**Endocrine System Conditions such as:**

Addison, Cushing, Diabetes, Glycogen Storage Disease PFK deficiency, Hypothyroidism, Immune Thyroidism, Hyperthyroidism and other Endocrine Issues.

**Results**



**Endocrine System Related Conditions by Issue and percentage of Cockers affected:**

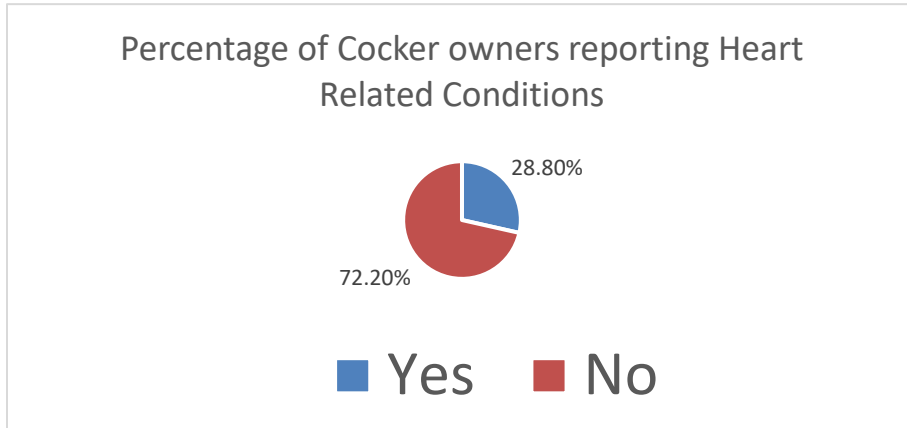
Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Addison	8	13	3	24	0.30%
Cushing	43	71	22	136	1.72%
Diabetes	7	11	5	23	0.29%
PFK Deficiency	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Hypothyroidism	86	140	30	256	3.24%
Immune Thyroidism	5	17	5	27	0.34%
Hyperthyroidism	6	8	7	21	0.27%
Other Endocrine System issues.	2	12	3	17	0.21%
<b>Total Cockers affected by Endocrine System conditions</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>6.39%</b>

**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by a Heart related condition?**

**Heart related conditions such as:**

Heart murmur, Dilated Cardio Myopathy DCM, Congestive Heart Failure

Results



Heart Related Conditions by Issue and percentage of Cockers affected:

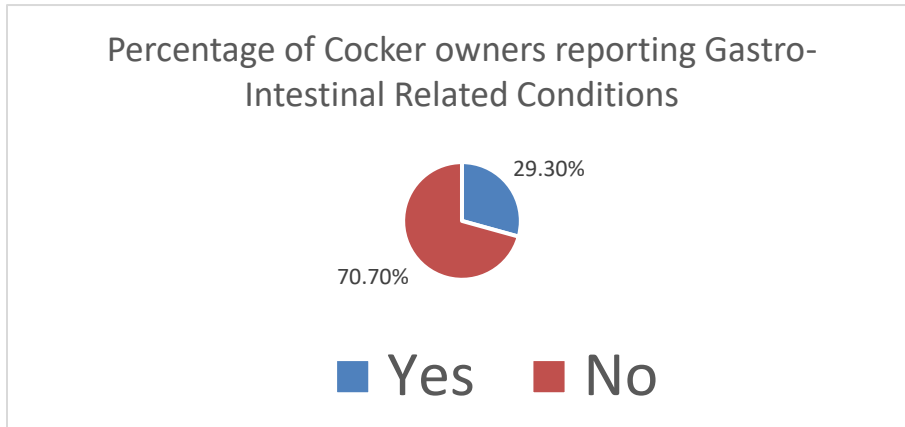
Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Heart Murmur	156	194	88	438	5.54%
Dilated Cardio Myopathy DCM	27	26	11	64	0.81%
Congestive Heart Failure CHF	18	28	3	49	0.62%
Other Heart or circulatory system Issues	35	35	19	89	1.12%
Total Cockers affected by Heart or Circulatory System Conditions	236	283	121	640	8.09%

**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by a Gastro-Intestinal System condition?**

**Gastro-Intestinal conditions such as:**

Irritable Bowl, Pancreatitis, Hernias (umbilical, Inguinal), Mega-Esophagus, Hepatitis - Liver issues, other G/I issues.

**Results**



**Gastro-Intestinal related Conditions by Issue and percentage of Cockers affected:**

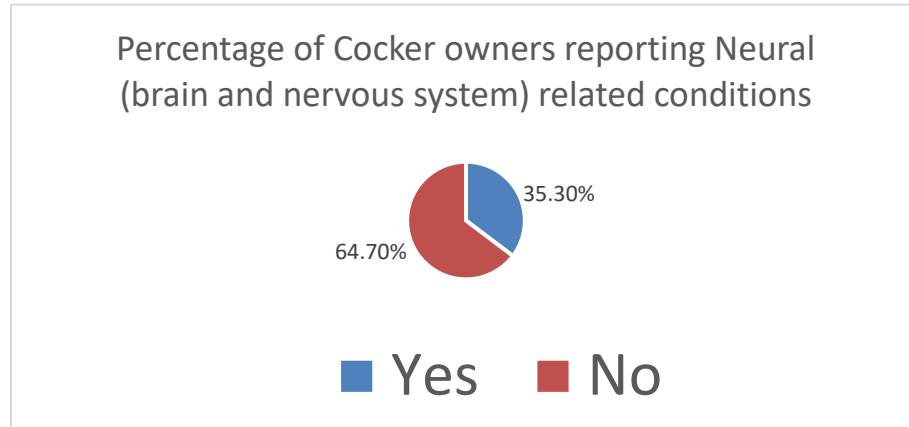
Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Irritable Bowl	68	54	53	175	2.21%
Pancreatitis	82	103	30	215	2.725
Hernias (umbilical, Inguinal)	83	86	68	237	3.00%
Mega-Esophagus	6	3	3	12	0.15%
Hepatitis - Liver issues	35	45	10	90	1.14%
Gallbladder issues	12	17	2	41	0.52%
Other G/I Conditions	53	34	41	128	1.62%
Total Cockers affected by G/I conditions	339	345	207	891	11.27%

**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by Neural (brain and nervous system) related issues?**

**Neural related issues such as:**

Aggression, Cocker rage, Fearfulness, Epilepsy, Degenerative Myelopathy, Acral Mutilation, Horner Syndrome, Fucosidosis, Dementia/Senility, Other Neural Issues.

**Results**



Neural (brain and nervous system) related Conditions by Issue and percentage of Cocker's affected:

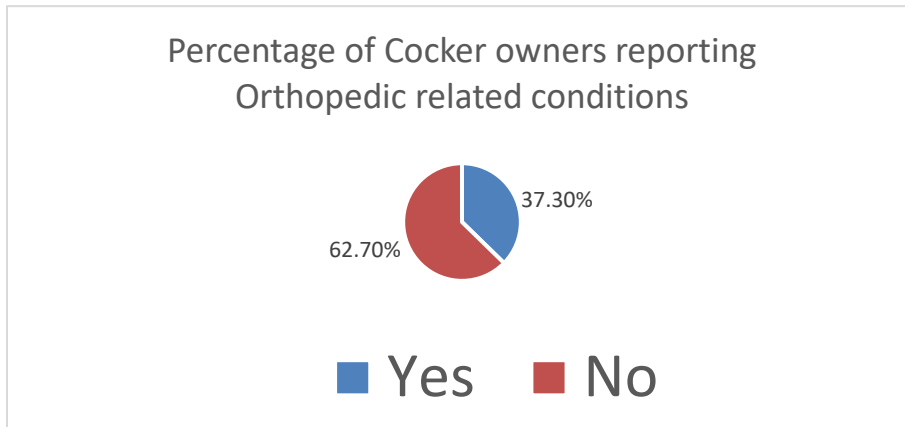
Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Aggression	105	38	53	196	2.48%
Cocker Rage	49	18	23	90	1.14%
Fearfulness	109	114	57	280	3.54%
Epilepsy and other Seizures	90	86	46	222	2.81%
Degenerative Myelopathy	3	1	1	5	0.06%
Acral Mutilation	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Horner Syndrome	16	12	1	29	0.37%
Fucosidosis	0	1	1	1	0.01%
Dementia/Senility	60	75	26	161	2.04%
Other Neural issues	38	44	31	113	1.42%
Total Cocker's affected by Neural related conditions	470	389	239	1097	13.88%

**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by Orthopedic related issues?**

**Orthopedic related issues such as:**

Exercise Induced Collapse, Hip Dysplasia, IVDD – Spinal Issue, Elbow Luxation, Patella Luxation, CCL Cranial Crucial ligament (CCL), ACL Anterior Crucial Ligament (ACL), Arthritis Knee, Arthritis Ankle, Arthritis Hip, Cleft Palate, Spinal Stenosis, and other Orthopedic Issues.

**Results**



**Orthopedic related Conditions by Issue and percentage of Cockers affected:**

Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Exercise Induced Collapse	7	17	8	32	0.40%
Hip Dysplasia	47	53	34	134	1.70%
IVDD – Spinal Issue	69	57	21	147	1.86%
Elbow Luxation	2	5	2	9	0.11%
Patella Luxation	75	107	33	215	2.72%
Cranial Crucial ligament (CCL)	25	38	29	92	1.16%
ACL Anterior Crucial Ligament (ACL)	105	80	40	225	2.84%
Arthritis Knee	27	28	19	74	0.94%
Arthritis Ankle	4	3	12	19	0.24%
Arthritis Hip	14	18	31	63	0.80%
Arthritis – Did not Specify location	24	20	10	54	0.68%



American Spaniel Club Foundation – Cocker Health Survey Results

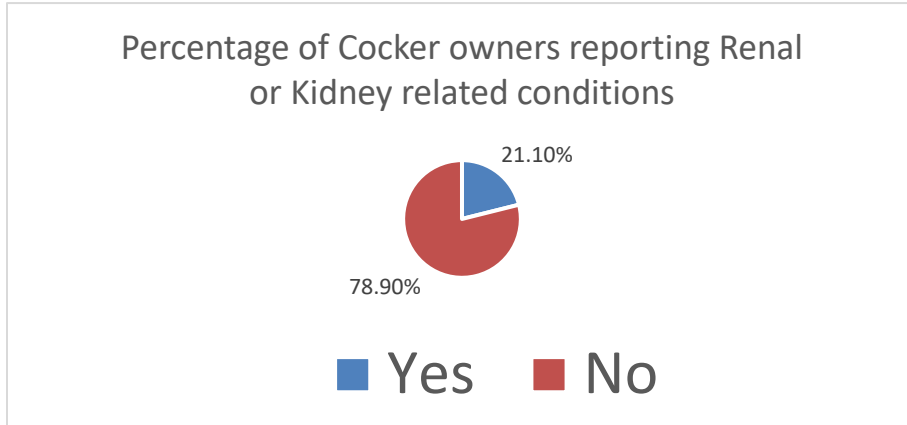
Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Cleft Palate	14	18	31	63	0.80%
Spinal Stenosis,	11	20	11	42	0.53%
Other Orthopedic Issues	37	31	6	74	0.93%
Total Cockers affected by Orthopedic related conditions.	461	495	287	1243	15.72%

**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by Renal or Kidney related issues?**

**Renal (Kidney) related issues such as:**

Familial Nephropathy, Kidney Failure, Kidney Stones, Cystitis, Crystals, Incontinence, other Renal Issues.

Results



Renal (Kidney) related Conditions by Issue and percentage of Cockers affected:

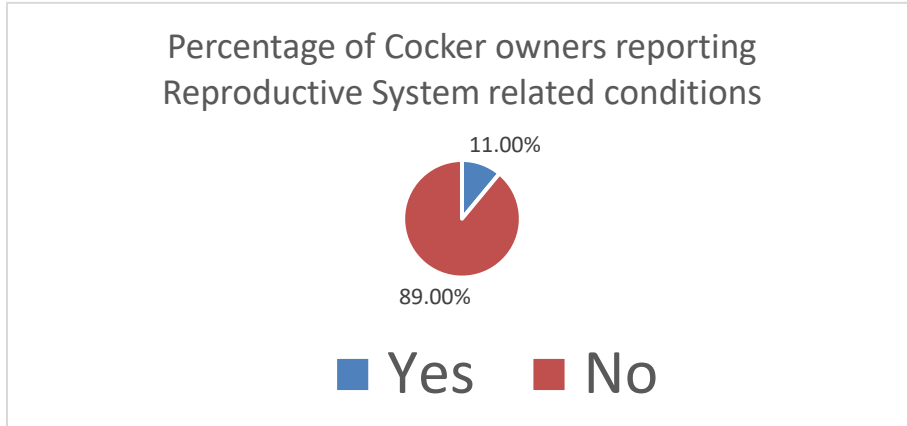
Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Familial Nephropathy	3	3	3	9	0.11%
Kidney Failure	56	111	33	200	2.53%
Kidney Stones	8	12	4	24	0.30%
Cystitis	11	33	9	53	0.67%
Crystals	21	45	16	82	1.04%
Incontinence	43	96	39	178	2.25%
Other Renal Issues	22	19	9	50	0.63%
Total Cockers affected by Renal or Kidney related conditions	164	319	113	596	7.54%

**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by Reproductive System related issues?**

**Reproductive System related issues such as:**

Eclampsia, False Pregnancy, Infertility - Male or Female, Uterine Inertia, Reabsorbed Puppies, Pyometra, Cryptorchidism (monorchid or bilateral, Number of puppies or presentation, other Reproductive Issues

Results



**Reproductive related Conditions by Issue and percentage of Cockers affected:**

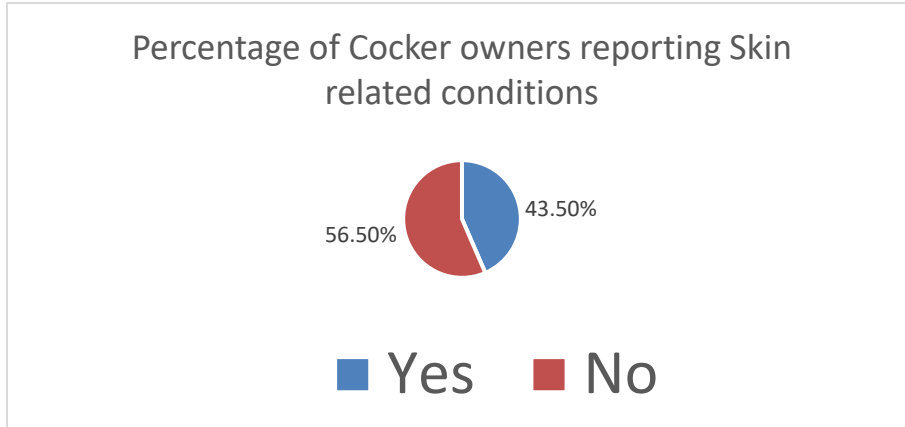
Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Eclampsia	N/A	15	N/A	15	0.33%
False Pregnancy	N/A	71	N/A	71	1.58%
Infertility - Male or Female	18	33	4	55	0.70%
Uterine Inertia	N/A	37	N/A	37	0.83%
Reabsorbed Puppies	N/A	40	N/A	40	0.89%
Pyometra	N/A	59	N/A	59	1.31%
Cryptorchidism (monorchid or bilateral)	46	N/A	N/A	46	1.38%
Number of puppies or presentation	N/A	26	N/A	26	0.58%
Hermaphrodite	N/A	N/A	N/A	9	0.11%
Other Reproductive Issues	2	30	1	33	0.42%
<b>Total Cockers affected by Reproductive System Conditions.</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>4.94%</b>

**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by Skin Condition related issues?**

**Skin Conditions related issues such as:**

Lip fold dermatitis, Seborrhea, Sebaceous Cysts, Dermatitis, Pyoderma (Bacterial skin infection), Alopecia, Interdigital Cysts, Other Skin Issues.

Results



Skin related Conditions by Issue and percentage of Cockers affected:

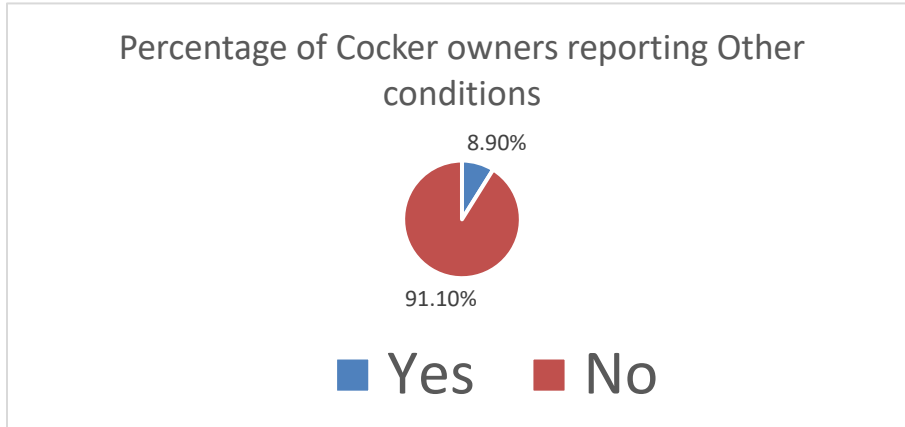
Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Lip fold dermatitis	84	98	31	213	2.69%
Sebaceous Cysts	45	55	33	133	1.68%
Seborrhea	198	262	114	574	7.62%
Dermatitis	105	135	101	341	4.31%
Pyoderma (Bacterial skin infection)	71	68	63	202	2.55%
Alopecia	13	18	6	37	0.47%
Interdigital Cysts	29	29	8	66	0.83%
Other Skin Issues	88	119	53	260	3.28%
Total Cockers affected by Skin Conditions.	633	784	409	1826	23.10%

**Have any of your cockers been diagnosed or afflicted by Other Conditions not addressed by this survey?**

**Other Conditions such as:**

Conditions reported were reviewed to determine if the condition fit into any other Survey categories or conditions. The results of those categories or conditions were adjusted accordingly. The remaining issues or conditions are captured here.

**Results**



**Other Conditions by Issue and percentage of Cockers affected:**

Condition	Affected Males	Affected Females	Unknown Sex	Total Affected	Percentage Affected
Dwarfism	2	0	0	2	0.02%
Muscle Wasting Disease	1	0	0	1	0.01%
Chronic Bronchitis	0	0	1	1	0.01%
Seizure after taking oral flea meds	1	0	0	1	0.01%
Tracheal Aphasia	0	0	1	1	0.01%
Pulmonary Embolus	0	1	0	1	0.01%