

Title:

Getting Under the Skin of West Highland White Terriers Using Primary Practice Clinical Data

Abstract: (Your abstract must follow this structure)**Objectives:**

West Highland White Terriers (WHWT) are often considered by veterinarians as 'the itchy/scratchy breed' but little prevalence exists on their overall health. This study aimed to report demography, mortality and common disorders in WHWTs under UK primary veterinary care and to explore co-morbid disorder associations with otitis externa (OE).

Methods:

Demographic, mortality and disorder data for the year 2016 were extracted from VetCompass™ de-identified patient records.

Results:

This study included 2053 WHWTs. Median age was 7.8 years (IQR 4.3-11.1). Of 164 deaths recorded, the median longevity was 13.4 years (IQR 11.0-15.0). The most commonly recorded causes of death were lower respiratory tract disorder (10.2%, 95% CI 4.9-15.4), neoplasia (10.2%, 95% CI 4.9-15.4) and spinal cord disorder 7.8% (95% CI 3.2-12.5). The most common specific disorders were periodontal disease (15.7%, 95% CI 14.1-17.3), OE (10.6%, 95% CI 9.3-11.9), overgrown nails (7.2%, 95% CI 6.1-8.4), hypersensitivity (allergic) skin disorder (6.5%, 95% CI 5.4-7.6%) and obesity (6.1%, 95% CI 5.1-7.2%). Of the top 20 disorders, no non-epidermal disorders were co-morbidly associated with OE while 3 of the 10 epidermal disorders (pododermatitis, pyoderma and dermatitis) were associated with OE.

Statement:

Compared with other common breeds, WHWTs were heavily over-represented for skin disease. High comorbidity between skin diseases suggests common underlying aetiopathogenesis pathways that may offer opportunities to control several skin conditions simultaneously. High mortality due to lower respiratory tract disease suggests that clinical focus should be placed on respiratory function in older WHWTs.