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## **Perceptions of dog breeding practices, breeding dog welfare and companion dog acquisition in a self-selected sample of Australian adults**

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### **Abstract**

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*Welfare considerations surrounding dog (Canis familiaris) breeding practices are contentious in some sectors of the community. However, public perceptions surrounding dog breeding practices are poorly understood. The aims of this study were to describe perceptions of dog breeding and associated welfare concerns held by members of the general public and identify whether factors exist that potentially predict these perceptions. Australian residents (n = 986) completed an online questionnaire investigating their perceptions of, and attitudes towards, companion dog breeding and other acquisition methods. Participants predominantly indicated that breeding dog welfare was important, that dog breeding should be regulated, and that tougher laws are necessary to improve breeding dog welfare. Furthermore, three groups of respondents were identified: those who supported breeder-sourced companion dogs but felt that current regulations were inadequate to ensure satisfactory welfare, those who disapproved of dog breeding and felt adoption was the only appropriate acquisition method, and those who felt breeding was acceptable and that current industry practices provide adequate welfare. Several participant factors predicted cluster membership, including age, characteristics considered important when acquiring a companion dog, the source of their most recent dog, and their dog breeding knowledge and/or experience. This study provides a direct preliminary examination of public perceptions of dog breeding, breeding practices, and associated welfare concerns, and the factors associated with these perceptions. This information can be used to guide those who provide companion dogs to the public and inform evidence-based policy development concerning companion dog breeding and acquisition.*

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**Keywords:** animal breeding, animal welfare, anthrozoology, breeding perceptions, Canis familiaris, dog adoption