

046 | Who are dog breeders?

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Introduction and aim: Breeding practices in farm animals are well known and constantly improved for example thanks to dedicated national institutes. In companion animals, such as dogs, the institutional support given to dog breeders is rather poor and breeders' education background is most often not associated with animal breeding, making this sector underdeveloped. In order to supply breeders with recommendations adapted to kennel conditions, obtaining data on their everyday practices is needed. The aim of our study was to describe everyday practices of dog breeders in French kennels thanks to a series of questionnaires.

Materials and methods: Three questionnaires were sent to all followers of NeoCare group via Facebook and via mailing list ($n = 3198$ and $n = 1515$, respectively; mostly dog and cat breeders) in 2018. Each questionnaire consisted of a series of 10–15 questions in French on three different topics: breeder characterization, breeder education, puppies' selling.

Results: The number of participants in the different questionnaires was 151 (breeder characterization), 109 (breeder education), 125 (puppies' selling). Breeders were mostly from France (148/151; 98%), with 32.9% (48/146) of breeders having less than 5 years and 13.0% (19/146) having more than 20 years of experience. Only 9.3% (10/108) of breeders

had no certificate allowing to breed dogs in France according to the French law. The majority of participants (62.7%; 94/150) bred only one dog breed, whereas only 2.0% (3/150) of them bred more than 5 breeds at the same time. Apart from breeding, some breeders provided also other services onsite such as boarding kennel (12%; 18/150), kibbles sale (8%; 12/150) or dog training (7.3%; 11/150). The average number of dogs housed per kennel (mean \pm SD) was 13.4 ± 14.2 , with 36% breeding bitches, 17% sires, 25% prebreeding stock and 22% retired. On average, 1.1 ± 0.4 persons worked at the kennel at full time. Staff working at the kennel consisted of breeder him/herself in 99.3% of kennels; family members in 19.9%; trainees in 5.3% and employees in only 2%. Mean number of puppies/kennel sold in 2018 was 20.0 ± 30.4 . One fourth (25.2%; 31/123) of puppies left the kennel at 8 weeks (the minimal age at sale according to the French law), 30.9% (38/123) at 9 weeks, 25.2% (31/123) at 10 weeks and only 18.7% (23/123) above 10 weeks of age. Few breeders (1.6%; 2/123) sold puppies neutered while others (13.0%; 16/123) included a request of neutering as a general term of sales contract. Only 23.4% (92/124) of breeders sold puppies systematically insured.

Conclusions: This study allowed to better characterize French kennels and dog breeders in terms of their general profile (treated in the above study), but also other fields of canine breeding, which remain to be presented elsewhere. Such analysis of kennels could be the first step aiming to structure the canine breeding sector, followed by development of science-based recommendations.

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Who are dog breeders?

INTRODUCTION

Dedicated national technical institutes have made breeding practices in farm animals known and are constantly improving this field of study. In companion animals, such as dogs, the institutional support given to dog breeders is limited. The breeders' education background is most often not associated with animal breeding. In order to supply breeders with recommendations adapted to their specific kennel conditions, it is important to understand the everyday tasks of the practice.

The aim of our study was to describe everyday practices of dog breeders in French kennels thanks to a series of surveys.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Fourteen surveys covering various aspects of dog and cat breeding facilities have been conducted between September 2017 and Mars 2019 among the NeoCare group followers (dog and cat breeders, vets, and other professionals of the canine sector). This poster presents the results of four of the surveys :



Survey 1:
Characterization of the breeder
n=151 answers

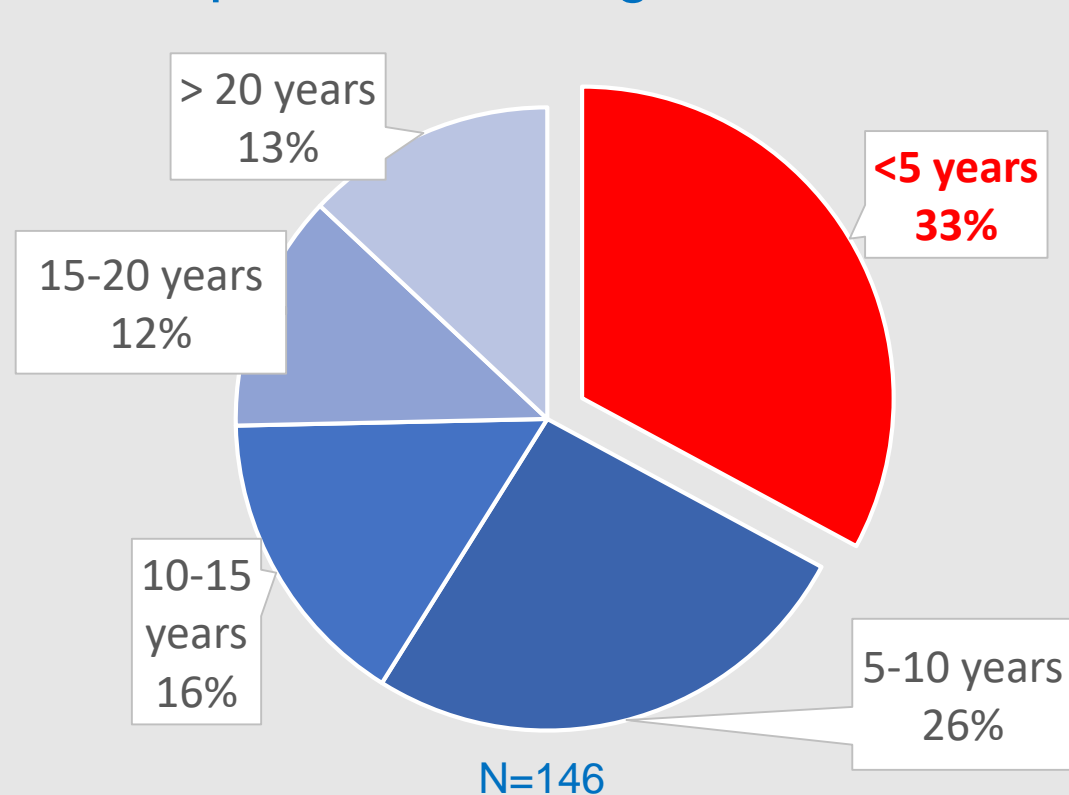
Survey 2:
Characterization of the breeding kennel
n=164 answers

Survey 3:
Breeder's education
n=109 answers

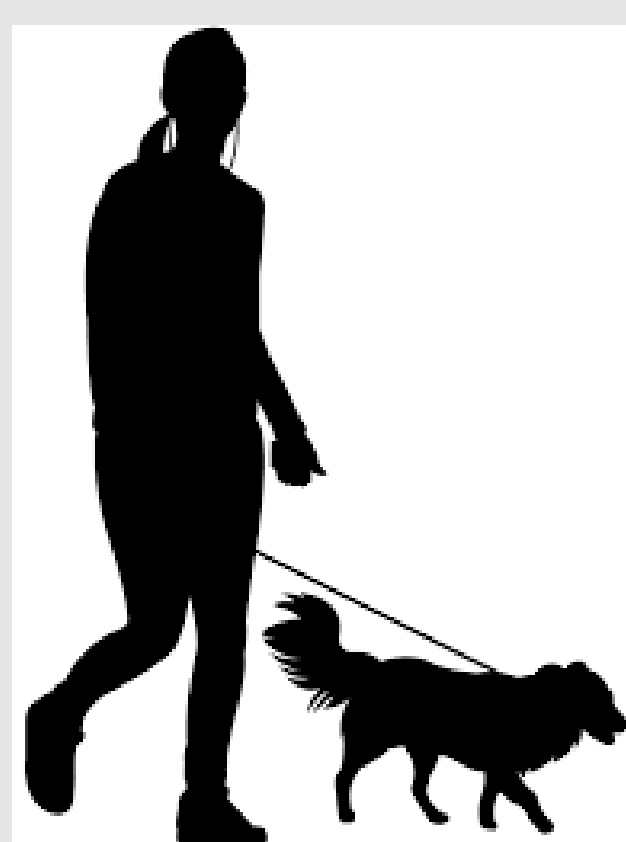
Survey 4:
The selling of puppies
n=125 answers

BREEDERS

Experience of dog breeders



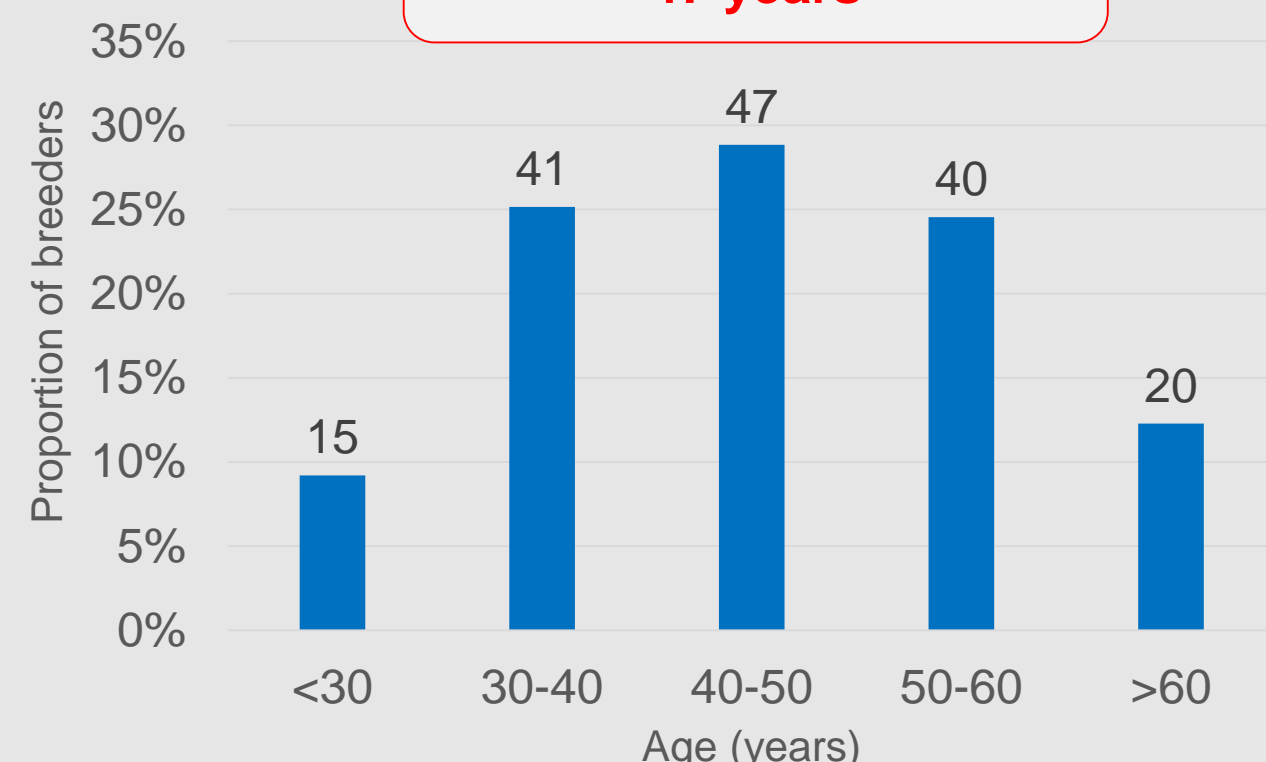
The most important value for a breeder was:



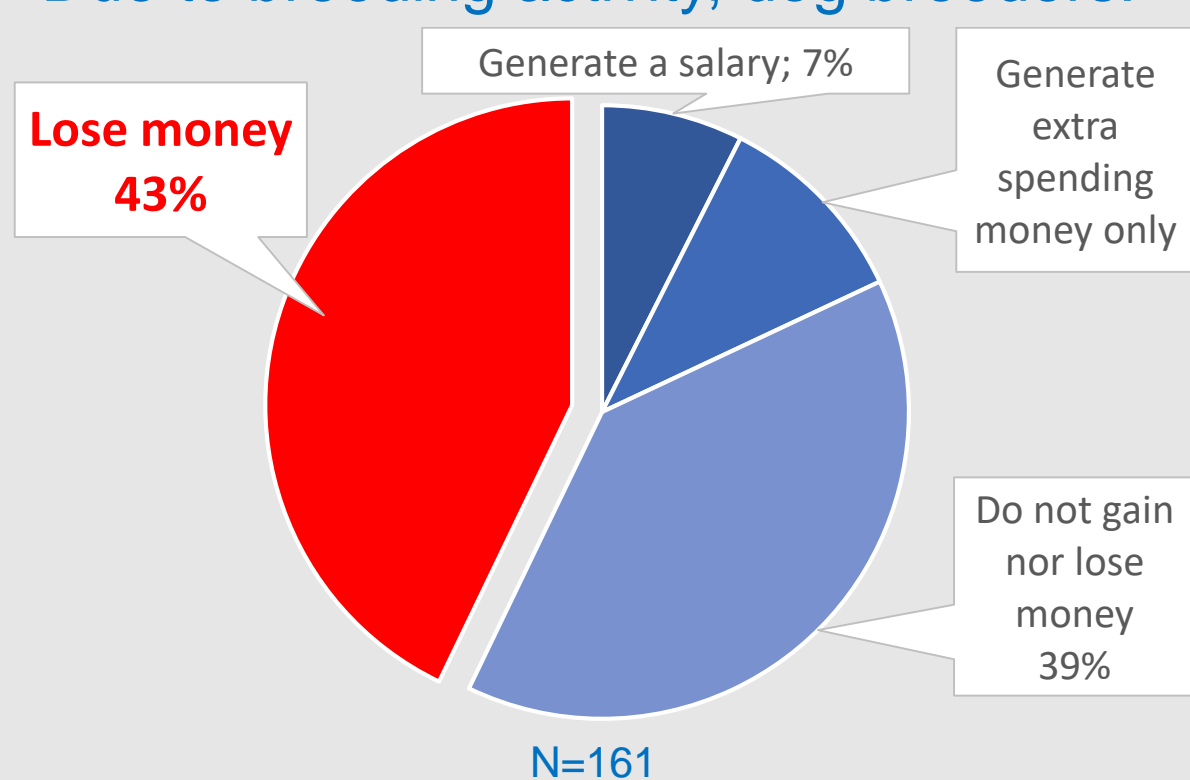
88%
(144/163)
were women



Mean age of breeders:
47 years



Due to breeding activity, dog breeders:



17%
(28/162)
had basic education in relation with animal breeding

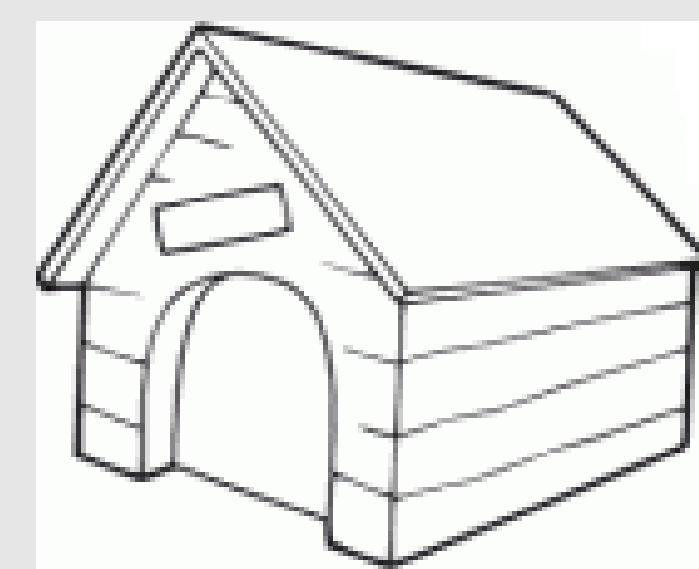
91%
(98/108)
had a certificate allowing to breed dogs in France

5.5 ± 2.2 /10
was the mean level of stress undergone by breeders due to breeding activity (1 - no stress; 10 - high stress)

51% (83/162)
had another professional activity, 51% (42/83) at full time

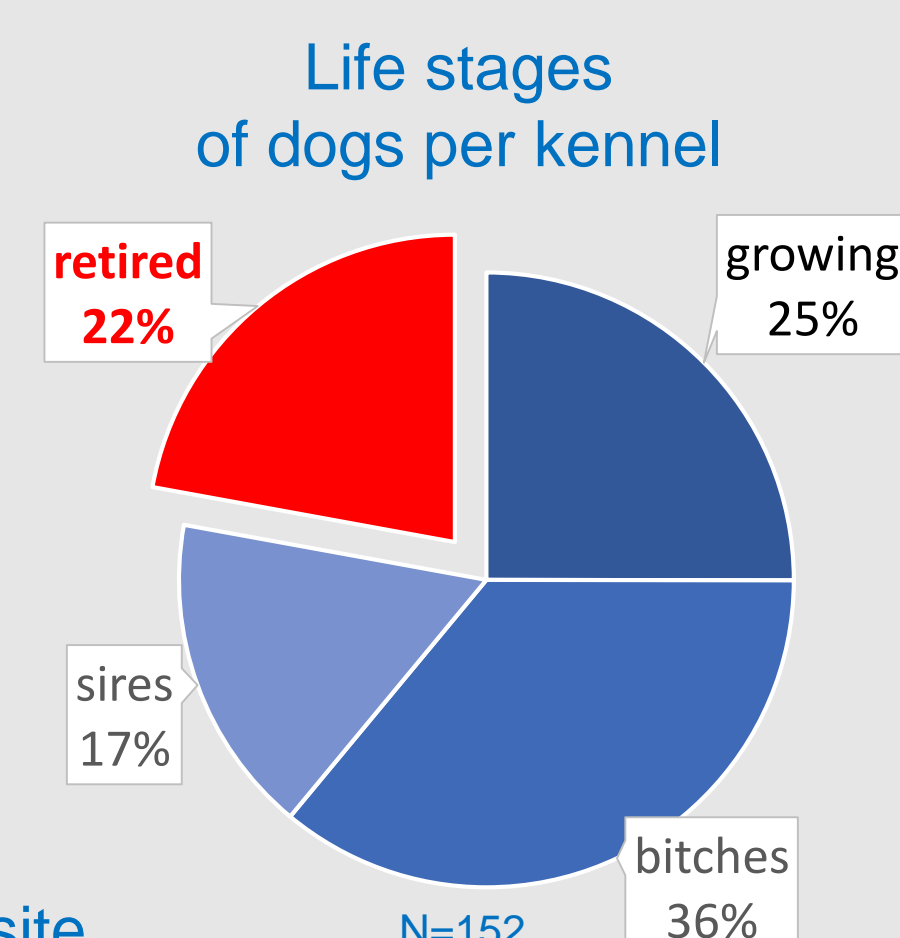
BREEDING KENNELS

63%
(94/150)
of kennels were mono-breed



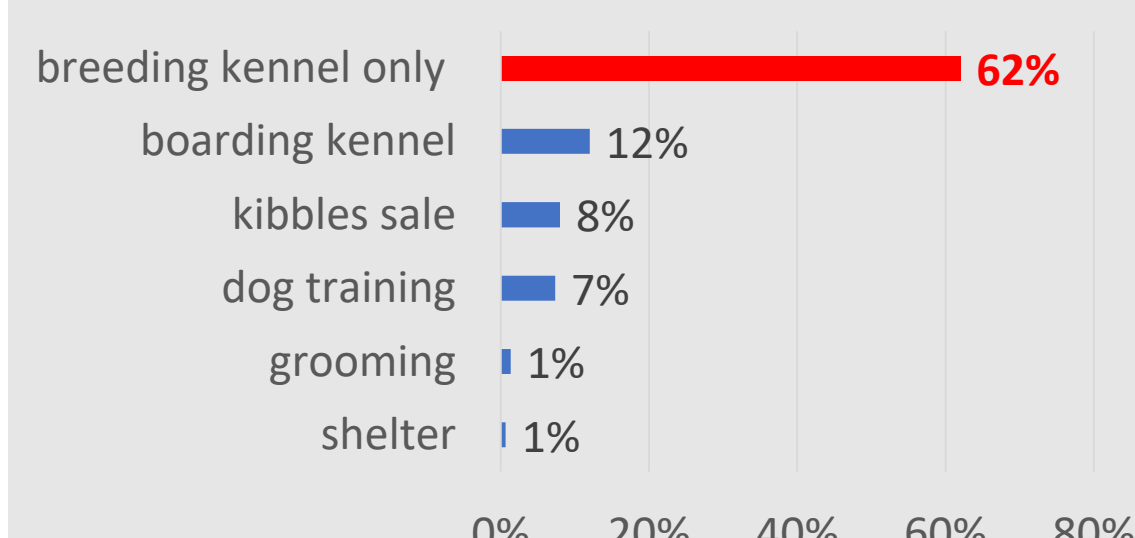
98%
(148/151)
of breeding kennels were localized in France

13.4 ± 14.2
was the mean number of adult dogs housed per kennel

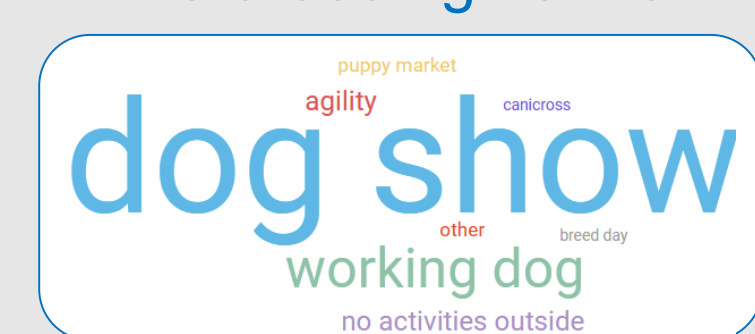


20.0 ± 30.4
was the mean number of puppies sold per kennel in 2018

Activities provided onsite in relation with the dog:

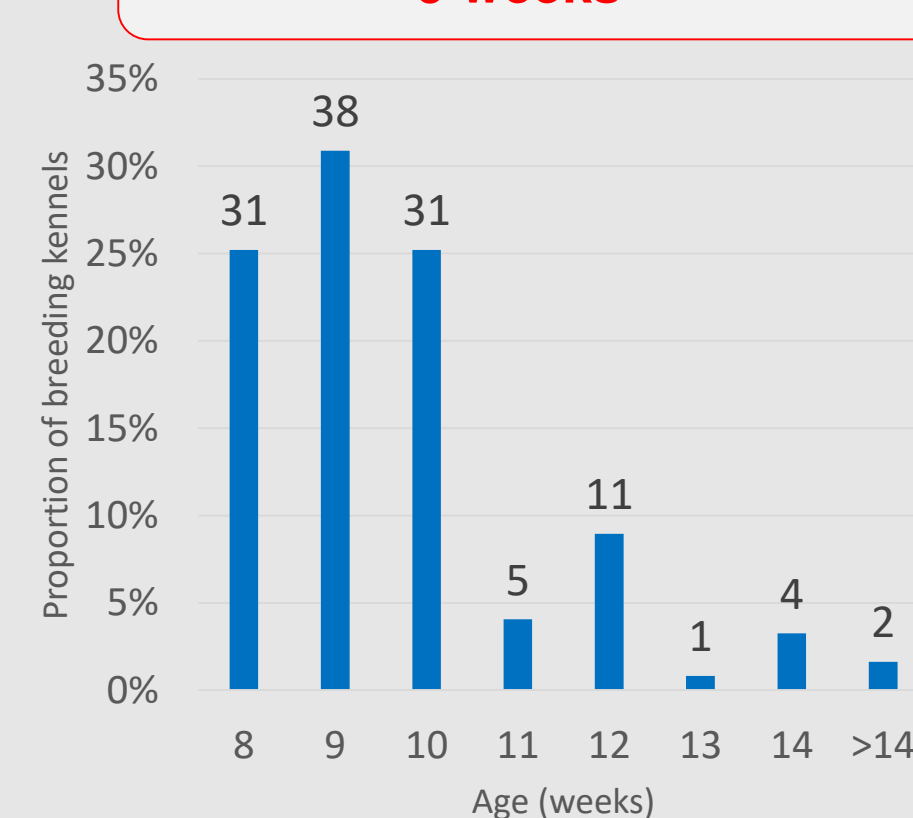


Activities outside the breeding kennel



23%
(29/124)
of kennels sold puppies systematically insured

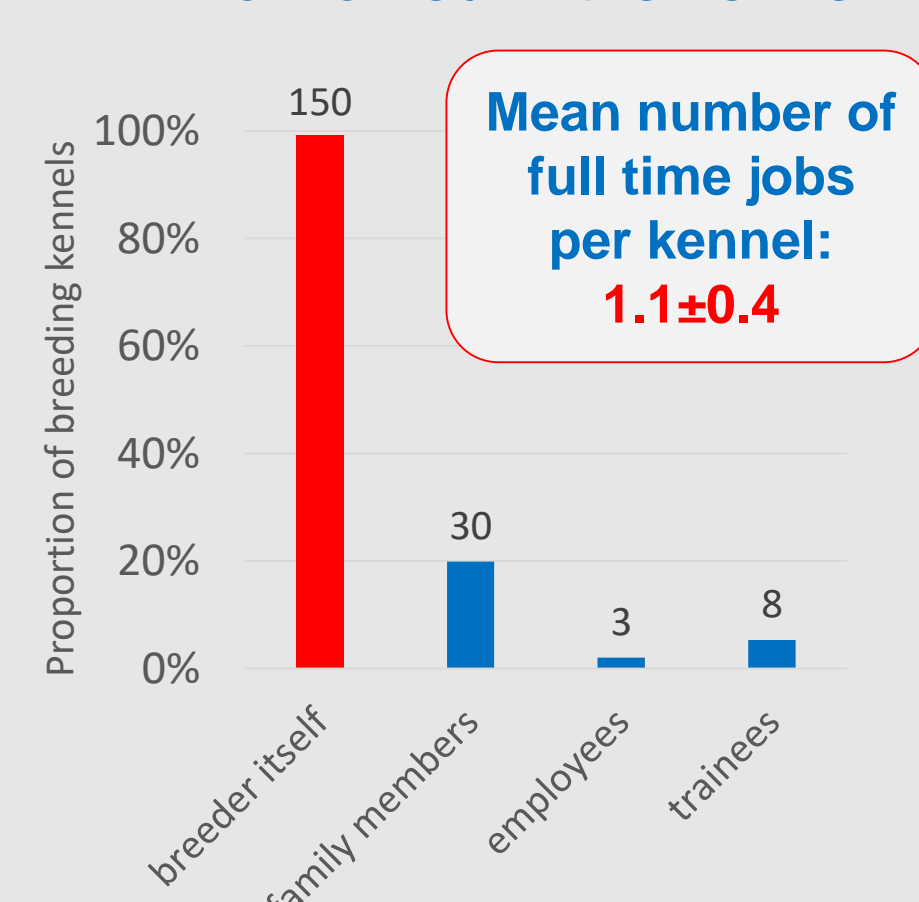
Mean age of puppies at sale:
9 weeks *



* In France, the minimal age at sale is 8 weeks.

2%
(2/123)
of kennels sold puppies systematically neutered

Who worked in the kennel?



Mean number of full time jobs per kennel:
1.1±0.4

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

- French dog breeders are mostly driven by passion, have small breeding facilities as well as another form of employment.
- This study allowed to better characterize French kennels and dog breeders in terms of their general profile (observed in the above study). Surveys in other fields of canine breeding, including kennel management and health issues need to be investigated further.
- Such analysis of kennels could be the first step aiming to structure the canine breeding sector, allowing the development of evidenced-based recommendations.
- Further surveys are required to compare French dog breeders, as well as cat breeders to breeding facilities from other countries.