

Participant Information sheet

'Assessing the relationships between Conformation, Gait and Health and Welfare in Canine Breeds: German Shepherd Dog'

Participant information

This document contains important information about the study. Please read the information carefully and contact the research team if you have any questions using the contact details provided at the end of the form.

You will have also been sent a questionnaire to complete, which covers your dog's clinical history and activity levels. Please complete the questionnaire and return to Dr. Alex Humphries (a.humphries@surrey.ac.uk) or bring your completed questionnaire with you to the session.

Purpose of the study:

The study is funded by the Kennel Club and aims to investigate if any musculoskeletal problem like pain or lameness is related or not to different body shapes in the German Shepherd dog.

Inclusion criteria:

German Shepherd dogs with current or previous history of musculoskeletal disorders, treatment or surgery (for example hip osteoarthritis, hip replacement, lumbosacral disease or pain, elbow or stifle problems) of both sexes, any age from 6 months old.

If your dog comes to the University grounds, an assessment of dog behaviour (University requirement to interact with students) will be completed at the start of the session by a veterinary surgeon.

Procedures:

If the session is held at the Biomechanics laboratory in the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Surrey, at the start of the session, your dog's behaviour will be assessed using the ASPCA SAFER® behavioural assessment. If the test identifies mild signs of anxiety, a muzzle will need to be used, but if aggressiveness is identified, your dog will not be able to participate in the study.

Fresh drinking water will be provided for your dog during the session, but please could you bring food for your dog on the day if necessary.

The measuring session could also be performed at your local vet or your own home.

The questionnaire you completed prior to the session about the dog's physical activity and clinical history will also be checked at the start of the session.

The body conformation of your dog (measures and shape) will be measured using a measuring stick and measuring tape, including height at the withers and length of the back, and the veterinary surgeon will measure body condition score, muscle tone, fat thickness and thigh circumference. We will take a photo of your dog against a grid on the wall. The whole session should not last longer than 20 minutes.

Why would you participate?

Although you and your dog will not benefit directly from the research, the study aims to better understand the movement and foot loadings in this breed. Correlations between musculoskeletal presentations in dogs of different conformation measures and/or type of activities and fitness will be analysed. The behavioural assessment, if performed, and the measurements are free of charge. You can be reimbursed for your travel expenses to travel to the University of Surrey if you wish to.

Possible risks:

The risks involved in the study are low as all procedures are pain free and are highly unlikely to cause any distress or harm to your dog. Your dog's welfare will be monitored throughout the study by the research team. If your dog shows any sign of distress or anxiety, the study will be stopped and your dog will be excluded from the study if necessary.

What if there is a problem?

The chief investigator will be present throughout the session and will monitor your dog's well-being. If your dog appears uncomfortable or suffers any deterioration of any kind in health and well-being, or experiences any unexpected or unusual symptoms, measurements will be stopped. Measurement can be re-started if possible; otherwise your dog will be removed from the study.

Emergency First Aid facilities and dog First Aid kits are available in the event of an emergency, although a medical emergency is unlikely to occur as a result of the study. If an incident occurs, data collection will be stopped. First Aid trained staff will be available and the research team will contact you immediately to discuss options. The research team will contact the Emergency Veterinary practice if necessary. Please note, that owners are responsible for all costs for any treatment required.

If you wish to make a complaint or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you or your dog have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact:
Miss Bridget Roberts (Biomechanics Laboratory Manager): E: b.roberts@surrey.ac.uk; T: 01483 68 9822.

The University has in force the relevant insurance policies which apply to this study. The University of Surrey does not provide cover for non-negligent harm to animals involved in research. If the research involves dogs: This does not prevent you from being liable for your animal's behaviour under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. If you wish to complain, or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been treated during the course of this study then you should follow the instructions given above.

Am I able to withdraw from the study?

You are free to choose to participate in the study and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Once the data collection session is completed, it will not be possible to withdraw from the study.

What will happen to the data collected?

The measurements will be unlinked from any information which identifies the owner or dog and then correlated with clinical findings. The results of the study will be published in peer reviewed

journals and the study will be published in The Kennel Club newsletters and on their website. If you would like a copy of the study's findings, please inform the research team.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

All information you provide about you and your dog will remain confidential and your personal details will not be disclosed at any time. Only the members of the research team will have access to the data from the study and only the principal researcher will have access to your information. The data collected during the session will be anonymous and will be published in journal articles and elsewhere, without disclosing your personal details or the name of your dog.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions regarding your participation in the study, please contact:

Dr. Alex Humphries (Chief Investigator, Research Fellow in Animal Biomechanics):

E: a.humphries@surrey.ac.uk; M: 07747191698

Dr. Constanza Gomez Alvarez (Co-investigator and Head of the Veterinary Biomechanics Laboratory):

E: c.gomezalvarez@surrey.ac.uk; T: 01483 689399