



BRACHYCEPHALIC WORKING GROUP
ANNUAL SUMMARY REPORT OF ACTIVITY DURING 2019

Prepared February 2020

The (Brachycephalic Working Group) BWG has had a busy and successful 2019 with three full meetings during the year as well as many other face-to-face and virtual meetings of the subgroups. Some of the key activities and progress is shown here in relation to the relevant action items. More information on BWG is available at www.ukbwg.org.uk.

Action 1: The Kennel Club to develop Breed Health and Conservation Plans for several brachycephalic breeds, including Bulldog, French Bulldog, Pekingese and Pug. Bespoke plans for each breed to be developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including breed clubs, researchers, Breed Health Coordinators, and, for brachycephalic breeds, in consultation with the BWG. Such plans should also be made available to breeders of puppies that will not be registered with the Kennel Club so that the plans have the greatest possible welfare impact.

[KC Breed Health & Conservation Plans \(BHCPs\)](#)

The BHCPs are a comprehensive plan made up of scientific evidence collated from a range of sources including insurance data, peer-reviewed literature, canine health scheme reports, and breed health surveys. In 2018, brachycephalic breed plans were completed for the: Bulldog, French Bulldog, Pug, Boston Terrier, Boxer, Bullmastiff, Griffon Bruxellois, Pekingese, King Charles Spaniel, and Japanese Chin. In addition to this, during 2019, brachycephalic breed plans were completed for the Chihuahua and Shih Tzu. The [French Bulldog BHCP](#) was released to the wider public in 2018, with the Bulldog BHCP made available on the breed council website in 2019. The remaining plans for the main brachycephalic breeds remain within the relevant breed clubs, and are yet to be openly released although summaries of actions have been provided to BWG. The Kennel Club will recommend their release as part of the agreed consultation with the BWG to ensure wider support from the breadth of stakeholder groups is given to the action plans established

within them for these breeds. BHCPs for the Bulldog, French Bulldog, Pekingese and Pug are to be updated annually.

Action 2: For BWG members to review the breed standards for brachycephalic breeds and recommend any changes for consideration by relevant breed health co-ordinators and breed clubs, the Breed Standards & Conformation Sub-group of the KC Dog Health Group and the KC Breed Standards and Studbook Sub-committee.

Breed Standards

A sub-group formed from members within the BWG have proposed amendments for the Pug, Bulldog and French Bulldog standards based on a wide review of available scientific evidence. The French Bulldog, Bulldog and Pug amendments are currently under review with the breed clubs and the KC. The KC Breed Standards and Studbook Sub-committee have indicated that they will consider any changes proposed by the breed clubs, whilst the Breed Standards & Conformation Sub-group of the KC Dog Health Group may consider proposing changes to the breed standards providing there is compelling evidence to support changes.

Action 3: The BWG to review points of concern for brachycephalic category 2 and 3 breeds, including exaggerated conformation and “difficulty breathing”, and make recommendations to the Breed Standards and Conformation Sub-Group of the KC Dog Health Group.

Points of concern for brachycephalic breeds have been covered in the BHCPs. In addition, specific changes have been included in the breed standard updates. The “Breed Watch Booklet” published by the Kennel Club includes specific points of concern for show dogs (which includes brachycephalic breeds).

https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/1159488/breed_watch_booklet-2018-web.pdf

Action 4a: BWG to understand and review current judge training (including continuing development) and practice, including the use of in-show health assessments such as exercise tolerance tests, with opportunity to make recommendations to the Breed Standards & Conformation Sub-group of the KC Dog Health Group.

The Judges’ Training and Vet Check sub-group

A sub-group formed from members within the BWG have attended a variety of dog shows and training days to speak to vets, judges and breeders about how the current process works. The sub-group is working closely with the Kennel Club to create a set of recommendations aimed at ensuring that the relevant issues surrounding brachycephalic health and welfare are encompassed in both judges training and vet checks at championship shows. Suggestions to strengthen judges’ education, specifically with regard to brachycephalics and the inclusion of body condition scores have been noted.

The new [Judges Competency Framework](#) is currently being reviewed and developed by the KC for the education, approval and listing of every level of judge, from those who aspire to judge, right through to open show judges and those who go on to award Challenge Certificates and judge championship show groups, and Best in Show. The system has been designed taking into account the feedback received from exhibitors, show societies and judges. It is hoped the JCF can incorporate recommendations by the subgroup.

Action 4b: BWG to review the current vet-check systems in place at major dog shows, with opportunity to make recommendations to the Breed Standards & Conformation Sub-group of the KC Dog Health Group.

Following the rollout of the [Judges Competency Framework](#), updates to the vet-check systems should then follow.

Action 5: BVA to investigate brachycephalic health scheme with breed health co-ordinators and Kennel Club, informed by other BWG members.

It is no longer planned that the BVA will develop a brachycephalic health scheme.

The [Kennel Club and University of Cambridge Respiratory Function Grading Scheme](#) was launched on the 2nd February 2019, focusing on providing breeders and owners of French Bulldogs, Bulldogs and Pugs with advice and guidance on whether or not to breed from their dogs. To date, approximately 100 Bulldogs and 100 Pugs have been involved in the RFG scheme, although slightly fewer French Bulldogs, and there are 39 vets currently trained to use the scheme. It is hoped once further research is available this could possibly be extended to further breeds. There was a slight decline in uptake after the initial launch, so a marketing push to include the RFG scheme during KC health testing days and a KC BOAS specific conference to discuss the scheme have been organised. The “5 Star Health Scheme” has been published by the Pug breed council, which includes the RFG scheme. In addition, there are French Bulldog and Bulldog health testing schemes in place which support the RFG scheme.

Action 6: BWG to communicate with companies and marketing bodies to seek commitments that they will not use brachycephalic breeds in their designs and imagery.

- i) Advertising Position Statement

BWG issued a [position statement on the use of brachycephalic dogs in advertising and the media](#), which was also issued as a press release.

- ii) Raising the issues associated with brachycephaly

There have been activities and campaigns by individual members of BWG to communicate with marketing bodies such as:

- The BVA [Pets in Advertising](#) guidelines.
- BVA have continued to contact individual advertisers to request they remove brachycephalic breeds from their advertisements.
- PDSA plans to target media planners with advice on the use of brachycephalic breeds through LinkedIn.
- RVC organised an event for advertisers to discuss the use of brachycephalic dogs in advertising. This event did not go ahead due to lack of uptake from the advertisers.

Action 7: Following 2017 launch with the Kennel Club, ensure Puppy Contract and Puppy Information Pack are prominent in BWG member communication channels, e.g. websites, social media and any print or broadcast media output on puppy-buying.

BWG continues to widely promote the use of the [Puppy Contract](#). The new-look Puppy Contract website was launched in October, and the contract was downloaded more than 1,000 times in the first month. The resources are being used by breeders and buyers alike – there were around 4,500 downloads of the factsheet for breeders in the first month.

Action 8: Veterinary members of BWG to collaboratively undertake activities at the individual, community and national levels (as outlined above) to influence demand for healthy dogs.

External Organisation Liaison

- Members of BWG have been approached by organisations worldwide requesting information on initiatives that the BWG has taken to date with a view to these organisations replicating this in their own country. BWG members have input to veterinary activities on brachycephalic health and welfare by a number of international bodies, such as FECAVA, FVE, WASAVA and HSVMA.
- BWG met with IVC to discuss the “[A Guide to Brachycephalic Breeds](#)” that is planned for distribution to clients in the UK.

Obesity

Obesity is recognised as an important condition with significant direct and indirect health and welfare consequences for brachycephalic dogs. Therefore, BWG has issued a [position statement on obesity](#). In addition, individual members of BWG have contributed further e.g. the [BVA](#) and [BSAVA](#) have developed separate positions on obesity.

Activities by individual member organisations

- The PDSA have developed and promoted pre-purchase consultations to the veterinary profession. The '[Which Pet?](#)' consultation framework helps the veterinary practice team educate prospective owners before they choose a pet.
- BSAVA are working with CFSG on consultation on 3rd party sales. They are also continuing to work with the BVA to produce joint responses where relevant and promote the RFG scheme material, alongside the KC. In addition, BSAVA work with CFSG/Defra on materials to support the legislation relating to dog breeding and conformation.
- BVA have contacted local authorities to see how animal activity licency regulations are enforced and interpreted.

Action 9: BWG members to promote, support and engage with research that aims to improve and increase the evidence base on brachycephalic dog health and welfare.

The research bodies within the BWG have continued to investigate areas of brachycephalics, including behaviour, genetics and conformational markers and reproduction.

Royal Veterinary College

- The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) has developed a [Brachycephalic Research Team](#) with the vision to reduce the negative welfare impacts of brachycephalism on companion animals through world-leading research and education.
- VetCompass has published studies on disorder prevalence for a number of brachycephalic breeds, including the [Bulldog](#), [French Bulldog](#), [Pug](#) and [Chihuahua](#), which have accompanying freely available [VetCompass Infographics](#) and a move to making the publications and data open access.
- Publication of research related to the dog-owner relationship for owners of brachycephalic dogs.
- Launched an online survey of the general public to establish awareness of brachycephalic issues.
- Developed an online interactive infographic called [Focus on Brachycephaly in Dogs](#) .

The University of Cambridge

- The [Cambridge BOAS Research Group](#) continues its aims to improve breed health long-term and optimise current treatment options for upper airway obstructions with evidence-based medicine. In 2019 there was data published on validation of exercise testing and laryngeal auscultation for grading brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome in pugs, French bulldogs, and English bulldogs by using whole-body barometric plethysmography.
- The [Kennel Club and University of Cambridge Respiratory Function Grading Scheme](#) was launched on the 2nd February 2019, focusing on providing breeders and owners

of French Bulldogs, Bulldogs and Pugs with advice and guidance on whether or not to breed from their dogs.

Additional BWG Activity

- BWG released a press statement in September 2019 '[Flat-Faced' Pup Popularity Plunges After Years Of Soaring](#) to report that there were 31 per cent fewer registrations of Pug puppies, seven per cent fewer Bulldogs and eight per cent fewer French Bulldogs in the first six months of 2019 compared with the first six months in 2018.
- Communications sub-group: An improved website for BWG is under development to facilitate better awareness of the issues and collaborative work to tackle them. The new website will provide a central hub for any relevant research as well as providing a single point of reference to support future BWG comms activity.