



<http://www.ukbwg.org.uk/>

Setting a limit for conformational exaggerations in dog breeds to halt the slide towards even more extreme conformations

Position Statement of the UK Brachycephalic Working Group

October 8th, 2020

Key points:

- **There are significant potential health and welfare issues associated with exaggerated physical conformations within dog breeds, including brachycephaly (flat-faced dogs).**
- **The BWG is particularly concerned about selection for further exaggeration within the current flat-faced (brachycephalic) population of UK dogs and the introduction of new breed variants with a range of extreme exaggerated features e.g. teacup types, exotic bully, toadlines.**
- **The current levels of conformational (body shape) exaggeration in the breeds recognised by the UK Kennel Club provide a limit beyond which future body conformational change in dogs must not go.**
- **Further exaggeration beyond the current extent of exaggeration of (flat-faced) brachycephalic breeds or the development of new brachycephalic (flat-faced) breed types with even more extreme conformation, is unacceptable.**
- **The BWG calls upon breeders, prospective owners and show judges for urgent action to reduce exaggeration of existing breeds.**
- **'Stop and think before buying a flat-faced dog'.**

Background

The UK Brachycephalic Working Group (BWG) recognises that significant potential health and welfare problems can result from continued selection towards progressively more exaggerated physical characteristics (conformations) within dog breeds.

Conformational exaggeration describes a physical and damaging features in a dog that has been deliberately selected by mankind to deviate progressively from the typical shapes of wild dogs that were the precursors of the modern domestic dog. Degrees of exaggeration can be scored from mild to severe, depending on how far this progression has gone.

Studies on a focused selection of brachycephalic (flat-faced) breeds have provided substantial evidence that many of the current conformational exaggerations associated with brachycephaly are associated with health and welfare issues in some dogs of other breeds that show brachycephaly (Lists 1 & 2).

We are extremely concerned about recent moves to introduce new breed variants with extreme exaggerations to the UK e.g. exotic bullies, toadlines, by either importation of new breed types or by selecting for more extreme conformations within current UK dogs.

What actions are required?

Based on the substantial evidence that is available, the BWG believe that the current levels of conformational exaggeration in the breeds recognised by the UK Kennel Club provide a limit beyond which future conformational change in dogs must not go. We are concerned that without urgent action, then further exaggeration will continue to accrue in current UK dogs and new breed variants will increase in number in the UK. We are therefore calling for three specific actions:

1. **Owners:** BWG urges all potential dog owners to
 - a. 'Stop and think before buying a flat-faced dog'. Consider whether owning a flat-faced dog is the right thing to do or whether another breed would be more appropriate for you to own.
 - b. If you still decide to purchase a flat-faced breed, only purchase a puppy directly from a reputable breeder and refuse to purchase a puppy whose parents show severe conformational exaggeration. Do not purchase a puppy without using the Puppy Contract.
2. **Breeders:** BWG urges all breeders to breed selectively towards less exaggerated types of brachycephalic (flat-faced) dogs, based on the broad evidence base showing the severe health risks associated with extreme or exaggerated conformations.
3. **Show judges:** BWG urges all show judges to promote dogs with minimal exaggerations ahead of those with more severe exaggerations, when awarding prizes.

List 1. Conformational exaggerations of brachycephalic (flat-faced) dog breeds with *strong evidence* health and welfare issues

- Narrowed nostrils
- Excessively wide and short head
- Excessively thick neck
- Thick skin folds, particularly nasal
- Protruding eyes (corneal exposure)
- Spinal Curvature (vertebral malformations/ scoliosis/ kyphosis)
- Inverted or screw tails
- Entropion and ectropion of eyelids

List 2. Conformational exaggerations of brachycephalic (flat-faced) dog breeds with *likely* health and welfare issues

- Abnormal leg conformation including very short legs or 'Queen Anne' curved forelimbs
- Excessively long hair coat
- Excessively short back