

Open letter from the Brachycephalic Working Group

A request to companies to avoid using ‘flat faced’ (brachycephalic) dogs in marketing and advertising

Brachycephalic dogs (dogs with flat faces/short muzzles including Bulldogs, French Bulldogs and Pugs) have grown hugely in popularity and ownership over recent years, fuelled by their increased prominence in advertising and the wider-media.

These dogs are often considered to look appealing, cute or comic, but breeding primarily for their looks has led to health problems in a substantial proportion of these brachycephalic dogs. These problems include:

- Breathing difficulties caused by anatomical defects in the upper airways
- Recurring skin infections as a result of skin folds
- Eye disease: corneal ulcers and infections
- Inability to give birth naturally
- Spinal and / or neurological problems

Whilst most owners have the wellbeing of their pet at heart, unfortunately many fail to recognise signs such as difficulty breathing as signs of poor health and welfare, with many considering these as “normal for the breed”. However, these problems have substantial welfare consequences for affected dogs, including inability to sleep, exercise or regulate body temperature properly. Reducing and ultimately eliminating these health problems is a goal shared by all those who care about the health and welfare of dogs, including the veterinary profession, welfare charities, the Kennel Club, breed clubs and both responsible breeders and owners.

Brachycephalic dog breeds are commonly used to market products and services. This only perpetuates the appeal and desirability of these breeds. Ethical advertisers and companies have an important role to play in promoting positive animal welfare and working with us to reduce the inappropriate promotion of flat-faced breeds.

We, the members of the Brachycephalic Working Group (a group set up to tackle the aforementioned issues), therefore ask all organisations and individuals, as part of their corporate social responsibility and brand protection **to refrain from the use of brachycephalic dogs (including in cartoons and/or CGI) in marketing materials and products and to publicly commit to this ethical stance.**

Signatories

Animal charities – Dogs Trust, PDSA, RSPCA
Academia – Royal Veterinary College, University of Cambridge
Dog registration and welfare – Kennel Club
Dog breed clubs – Bulldog, French Bulldog, Pug
Veterinary profession – British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA), British Veterinary Association (BVA)



Contact email addresses: BVA media@bva.co.uk , Kennel Club BWG@thekennelclub.org.uk

Further info on BWG: <https://www.vet.cam.ac.uk/boas/resources-1/brachycephalic-working-group-bwg>