

# Our shared human responsibilities to protect companion dogs from being flat-faced

The **flat-faced** (brachycephalic) conformation (body shape) is frequently associated with **health problems** in dogs.

Current UK animal welfare legislation requires us **all** to contribute to our shared collective responsibility to **safeguard** the welfare of companion dogs:



The Animal Welfare Act (2006) states that the welfare needs of dogs must be met including the need to be able to **exhibit normal behaviour patterns** and the need to be **protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease**.



e.g. Blinking fully and wagging a tail are normal behavioural patterns in dogs.



e.g. Struggling to breathe or sleep causes suffering to dogs.

The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) Regulations 2018 states that 'No dog may be kept for breeding if it can reasonably be expected, on the basis of its genotype, phenotype\* or state of health that breeding from it could have a **detrimental effect on its health or welfare or that of its offspring**'.

\***Phenotype** refers to the physical shape of the dog's body i.e whether this is an extreme body shape that is linked to predictable health issues in current and future generations.

Some dogs from **extreme** flat-faced breeds such as French Bulldog, Pug and English Bulldog are **unable** to

- Breathe easily
- Blink fully
- Give birth naturally
- Flex their spines
- Have a tail that can wag
- Sleep comfortably
- Exercise freely



In consequence, affected dogs are prone to

- Respiratory disease
- Heatstroke
- Eye ulcers
- Skin fold infections
- Spinal disease
- Mating and birthing problems

## How we can each contribute to protect the health and welfare of dogs from being flat-faced

### 1. Reduce the popularity of flat-faced dogs

- Share and act on the BWG message to 'Stop and think before buying a flat-faced dog'
- Do not 'like' or share images on social media that feature flat-faced dogs
- Inform anyone using flat-faced dogs in advertising of your dissatisfaction

2. If you already own a flat-faced dog, monitor them carefully for signs of illness and seek veterinary advice on how to prevent these or stop them getting worse.

3. Move towards less extreme dogs in the future (i.e. those with a longer muzzle, reduced skin folds and a longer tail) to buy or breed from if you still want to do so after understanding the wider issues associated with flat-faced dogs.

BWG encourages anyone considering getting a dog with brachycephaly to **"Stop and think before buying a flat-faced dog"**