



UK Brachycephalic Working Group

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

National Plan

Our Shared Human Responsibilities to Protect Dogs Kept as Companion Animals from the Welfare Harms of Brachycephaly (being Flat-faced)

8th March, 2023

Flat-faced describes those types of dogs that are deliberately bred to have shortened or no muzzles. Many humans find the flat-faced look in dogs to be very cute, with certain flat-faced dog breeds such as French Bulldogs, Pugs and English Bulldogs currently having huge popularity. However, the extreme body shapes of some of these dogs is acknowledged to promote serious health issues related to breathing, the eyes, skin folds, spinal problems and difficulty giving birth. Although owning a dog can benefit humans mentally, socially and physically, dog ownership also brings legal and ethical welfare responsibilities to protect these animals from avoidable harms.

You can play your part to protect the lives of dogs in three main ways.

1. **Helping to dramatically reduce numbers and popularity of dogs with flat-faced body shape by:**
 - If you are considering getting a brachycephalic (flat-faced) dog, **'Stop and think before buying a flat-faced dog'**
 - Widely sharing the BWG message to **'Stop and think before buying a flat-faced dog'** to encourage anyone else considering purchasing a brachycephalic (flat-faced) dog to learn about the welfare challenges faced by these dogs.
 - If you are considering breeding from your brachycephalic (flat-faced) dog or bitch, **Stop and think**
 - Do not 'like' or share any social media or other posting that features imagery of flat-faced dogs
 - Contact businesses using flat-faced dogs in advertising to express your dissatisfaction

2. **If you already own a flat-faced dog, try to reduce the negative impacts of the flat-faced body shape on your dog's health by understanding that:**
 - Audible breathing and/or snoring at rest is never normal or acceptable for any dog

- Flat-faced dogs can have prominent bulging eyes that are prone to dryness and ulceration
- Flat-faced dogs often also have deep skin folds around their face, limbs and bottom that can lead to severe skin fold dermatitis
- Some flat-faced dogs are born with abnormal spines that cannot flex normally and predispose to severe spinal disease later in life
- Flat-faced dogs can be predisposed to problems giving birth naturally and often require caesarean section

Note: For any health concerns in your flat-faced dog, always consult your veterinary practice and don't rely on advice found or given on the internet or on social media

3. If you still plan to buy a flat-faced dog in the future despite awareness of the health and welfare risks to these types of dogs:

- Promote and support efforts to move dog breeds away from harmful extreme body shapes such as being flat-faced
- Use the Kennel Club Assured Breeder Scheme and the Puppy Contract to help protect you and your puppy from unscrupulous and low-welfare sellers
- Only purchase a dog that has been bred away from extreme body shapes such as flat faces, skin folds and lack of tail that are linked to poor innate health
- Ensure that any dog you may purchase (and their parents) has passed all relevant health tests for their breed

BWG Message to the Public:

“Maximising good health, welfare and temperament overrides all other considerations for dogs”

This position statement outlines how each of us who care about dogs can play our part to protect dogs kept as companion dogs from the harms that often come with extreme body shapes, especially for dogs bred with flat faces (brachycephalic) such as French Bulldog, Pug and English Bulldog.

The Brachycephalic Working Group (BWG) comprises the major dog welfare organisations in the UK. BWG considers the animal health and welfare problems linked to breeding for a flat face are some of the UK's leading canine welfare priorities.

BWG accepts the serious health problems associated with the flat-faced body shape can cause many dogs to suffer. But by all of us working together as a welfare-focused society, we can bring about the changes needed to protect dogs kept as companion dogs from the welfare harms of being flat-faced.

If we all play our part to protect dogs, BWG believes that the suffering attributable to health problems associated with the brachycephalic (flat-faced) conformation can eventually be eliminated.