

Background to the press release

Several of the UK national media ran a national storyline that trivialised animal suffering when they shared a story about a dog that won a Richard Madeley lookalike competition.

Links to the UK media storylines include:

<https://www.itv.com/news/granada/2025-08-18/richard-madeley-lookalike-contest-crowns-winner>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c2l7gqdzv1po>

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-15008305/Richard-Madeley-lookalike-competition-baffles.html>

UK Brachycephalic Working Group (BWG) Press Release

19th August, 2025

Noisy breathing in flat-faced dogs is never normal – it's a red flag for suffering

Following news that a pug, who has extreme conformation and noisy breathing won a Richard Madeley lookalike competition in Stockport, the Brachycephalic Working Group (BWG) issued the following statement:

Dan O'Neill, chair of the Brachycephalic Working Group said, "We were concerned to see reports of a Pug with very noisy breathing winning a Richard Madeley Lookalike competition. While this may have been intended as light-hearted fun, it highlights a serious issue: noisy breathing in dogs is never normal.

For flat-faced breeds such as Pugs, [English] Bulldogs and French Bulldogs, snorting, wheezing or rasping sounds are often a sign of Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS), a serious condition that prevents dogs from breathing comfortably and can cause lifelong suffering.

The key message is clear: noisy breathing is a warning sign, not a joke. We want owners to recognise the problem and take action to help their dogs live healthier, happier lives, and we want the UK media to help by not promoting unhealthy dogs.

Owners sometimes mistake snoring or snorting for something endearing, but in reality, it means their dog is struggling for breath. These dogs are not quirky, they are unwell and need help.

While we appreciate the light-hearted intent of recent coverage, it was a missed opportunity by the media to raise awareness of the very real health challenges these dogs face. We hope that responsible media work with us and play a key role in stopping to perpetuate the appeal of these dogs by adhering to animal welfare guidelines, and not promote dogs that are unhealthy due to extreme conformation and unethical breeding.”

The BWG’s advice to the general public is:

- Stop and think before buying a flat-faced dog.
- Monitor their pet’s breathing, even at rest, and seek veterinary advice if they notice noisy breathing.
- Always keep your flat-faced dog slim.
- Avoid over-exercising dogs with breathing problems, and keep your dog cool on hot days.
- Consider the Respiratory Function Grading Scheme, a simple vet check that can detect problems and guide care (thekennelclub.org.uk/rfgs).

The Brachycephalic Working Group, which was set up in 2016 to improve flat-faced dog welfare, wants owners of flat-faced dogs to become more aware of how their dog is breathing and seek veterinary advice if their dog’s breathing is noisy whilst resting or lightly exercising.

For more advice, visit ukbwg.org.uk.