



**VETERINARY IRELAND**

**POLICY DOCUMENT**

**ON**

**BRACHYCEPHALIC DOGS**

**2017**

**AS RATIFIED BY**  
**VETERINARY IRELAND NATIONAL COUNCIL**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> NOVEMBER 2017**



## Veterinary Ireland Policy Document on Brachycephalic Dogs

Veterinary Ireland calls on Kennel Clubs, breeders of flat-faced dogs and members of the public who keep flat-faced dogs, to work together to ensure that by 2030, all flat-faced dogs born in Ireland can breathe with ease.

So-called brachycephalic (flat faced) dogs such as Pugs and Bulldogs have risen in popularity in recent years, despite the fact that they suffer from serious health issues. The UK Kennel Club's own research shows that 50% of Pugs, Bulldogs and French Bulldogs have significant breathing problems, and that only 7-15% of them breathe like a normal, non-brachycephalic dog.

Affected dogs have noisy breathing, with snoring and/or snorting in more severely affected dogs. The noisy breathing is more evident after exercise or when the dog is stressed and may be so severe as to cause the dog to choke to the point of unconsciousness.

This is inextricably linked to their very flat faces, as well as other inherited aspects of their conformation, including narrowed, constricted airways, pinched nostrils, and shortened, squat necks.

Veterinary Ireland believes that this is a human-caused issue, and therefore there has to be a human-caused answer.

There are two aspects that need to be addressed: **demand** and **supply**.

Veterinary Ireland believes that wider society must be educated to recognise affected dogs and to stop the demand for pups from unhealthy dogs. This is difficult to achieve, but examples of what can be done include:

- a) Active campaigns by veterinary and animal welfare organisations to increase awareness of the problem.
- b) The cessation of use of images of these breed types in advertising and in the media.

The supply of unhealthy dogs also needs to be addressed. Veterinary Ireland calls for those bodies responsible for the breeding and showing of brachycephalic dog breeds to seriously review the breed standards so that dogs that show any evidence of breathing problems are automatically disqualified from competition, and to examine other ways of improving the health of these breeds.

## Veterinary Ireland Policy on Brachycephalic Dogs



If the health of these breeds is not improved, animal welfare groups are starting to talk about having certain breeds banned completely.

Veterinary Ireland appreciates the appeal of Pugs, French Bulldogs and Bulldogs: they are charming characters, full of personality.

However, Veterinary Ireland believes that it is essential that the conformation of these breeds is altered by selective breeding to ensure that they can breathe more easily.

Veterinary Ireland recognises that the Irish Kennel Club is also concerned about this issue and that steps have already been taken to improve breed health.

Veterinary Ireland recognises that breeding of extreme versions of these breeds is often carried out by breeders who are not affiliated to official bodies, and that it is not easy to modify such breeding programmes.

Nonetheless, further actions must be taken to improve this aspect of animal welfare in Ireland and Veterinary Ireland calls on all those involved to take necessary steps to achieve this goal.



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