



# **A Response to the Norwegian Court Ban Against the Breeding of English Bulldogs and Cavalier King Charles Spaniels**

## **A WSAVA Position Paper**

The World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA), through its Hereditary Disease Committee and Animal Wellness and Welfare Committee would like to address the recent Norwegian ban against the breeding of English Bulldogs and Cavalier King Charles Spaniels. We recognize the serious welfare issues that exist in relation to brachycephaly (short noses and skulls), as well as other extreme anatomy and hereditary diseases in dogs and all purposefully bred animals. We support and promote the breeding of healthy animals and support animal welfare laws that reduce the suffering of animals and optimize their welfare. We also support the efforts of Animal Protection Norway and the Norwegian Animal Welfare Act that states, “Breeding should promote traits that provide robust animals with good function and health.”

Health-focused breeding and husbandry practices are the means to improve the health of purposely bred animals. The selection of breeding dogs and cats must avoid the extreme conformation that predisposes to disease and poor welfare. Breeders must also select against common as well as breed-specific hereditary diseases. Evidence based pre-breeding health screening in purposely-bred dogs and cats – whether pedigreed or mixed-breed - is health quality control. Many countries, through kennel clubs and cat registries in collaboration with the veterinary profession, have established scientifically based, pre-breeding health screening guidelines for breeds. The Norwegian court decision states that its verdict will give a clear signal to everyone who breeds about making thorough assessments.

Methods to promote or legally mandate animal welfare compliance vary internationally. Animal welfare can be effectively improved by focusing on the monitoring of validated breed health improvement programs and breeder compliance with local welfare laws. This will foster positive intergenerational change and global improvement of animal welfare.

We in the veterinary profession seek to educate the dog and cat-buying public to ask breeders for veterinary documentation of pre-breeding health screening results on the parents of puppies and kittens, and to ask their veterinarian for advice. Altered public demand should encourage breeding practices that produce healthier pets and create real changes.

### **The World Small Animal Veterinary Association:**

- Prioritizes the breeding of animals that focuses on their health and welfare
- Supports Animal Welfare Laws that reduce the suffering of animals and enhance their good welfare
- Encourages kennel clubs and cat registries to adjust breed standards to address and avoid extreme conformation and disease predisposing anatomy
- Encourages kennel clubs and cat registries to establish breeding guidelines that include breed-specific pre-breeding health screening to avoid genetic diseases, disease risk from exaggerated anatomical features, and monitoring of breed health

- Encourages breeders to work with the veterinary profession to perform pre-breeding health examinations, to select healthy breeding dogs and cats, and to provide pet buyers with official documentation of health screening
- Encourages future pet owners to consult with a veterinarian before buying a purposely bred dog or cat, to assess their health and the health of their parents

A Background and General Statement on Health-focused Breeding is available on the WSAVA website [here](#).

Other resources from the WSAVA Hereditary Disease Committee are available [here](#).