



THE KENNEL CLUB

Play Your Part:

Breeding, Buying and
Bringing Up Brachycephalic
Dogs Better



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One of our top priorities is the welfare of flat-faced (otherwise known as brachycephalic) breeds, such as Pugs, Bulldogs and French Bulldogs.





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Play your part: Breeding, buying and bringing up brachycephalic dogs better



Our aim

The Kennel Club is a profit-for-purpose organisation that represents dog breeders, owners and enthusiasts, and invests in innovative research that improves the health of dogs. One of our top priorities is the welfare of flat-faced (otherwise known as brachycephalic) breeds, such as Pugs, Bulldogs and French Bulldogs.

This report aims to discuss:

- Health and welfare issues associated with these breeds;
- Initiatives that have been introduced to tackle these problems;
- Our recommendations on how to reduce health issues and welfare concerns within these breeds.

The problem

French Bulldogs, Pugs and Bulldogs are common in the UK, representing around one in every five dogs. Some dogs within these breeds are known to have complex, painful and debilitating health issues that cause them to suffer. Whilst demand is now levelling off, over the past decade there has been an exponential rise in the popularity of these dogs which has sadly meant that responsible breeders, who breed with health and welfare as a priority, have not been able to keep up with the sudden spike in demand. Instead, there has been a rise in irresponsible or ignorant breeders seeking to fill



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this gap, some of whom produce more extreme looking dogs that have a shorter lifespan, are unhealthy, have higher vet bills, and are more at risk of being abandoned by owners.

The backdrop

There have been several court cases in parts of Europe regarding legal restrictions on the breeding and/or showing of certain brachycephalic dogs. We do not believe prohibition is the solution to stopping these dogs from suffering and have grave concerns that it could:

- Encourage the breeding of new, similar breeds or crosses that are no healthier, or may even be more likely to suffer, than the breeds that have been banned;
- Create a welfare crisis if dog owners abandon their pets because of the fear of poor health and high vet costs in the future;
- Alienate owners of these breeds forcing them to adopt a bunker mentality, limiting our ability to influence them on how to breed, buy and care for their dogs.

Our ideas for impact

- Progress has already been made by breed clubs that encourage their members to health screen and follow appropriate breeding advice. This progress is ongoing;
- We believe that education and behaviour change of breeders, puppy buyers and dog owners is key to having the biggest impact. Efforts should not be limited to one organisation or group, but requires a collective effort;
- If all of those involved in a dog's life, including breeders, puppy buyers, dog owners and vets, play their part, then we can protect and significantly improve the health and welfare of these breeds for generations to come.

Health issues seen in popular brachycephalic breeds



Bulldogs, French Bulldogs, and Pugs can suffer from health issues associated with being flat-faced, also known as brachycephalic (*brachy*, meaning short and *cephalic*, meaning of the head).

Brachycephaly occurs across a spectrum, with some dogs having almost entirely flat faces, while others are significantly less exaggerated, such as Boxers and Staffordshire Bull Terriers. Brachycephaly is not restricted to pedigree dog breeds; other breeds not recognised by The Kennel Club (e.g. American Bulldogs and American Bullies) and some crossbreeds can and do also exhibit this face shape.

Health issues that are linked to brachycephaly include:

Breathing problems

Narrow nostrils, an elongated soft palate, and an excess of soft tissue can block the movement of air through a dog's nose and throat. This can prevent affected dogs from breathing normally.



This condition is called Brachycephalic Obstructive Airways Syndrome (BOAS) and can chronically impair the ability to carry out everyday tasks, such as exercise, playing, eating and sleeping. Research commenced around 10 years ago by the University of Cambridge Veterinary School (funded by The Kennel Club Charitable Trust), has evidenced that there are multiple factors that lead to BOAS in some of the brachycephalic breeds, and that this condition is a complex one¹.

Numerous studies have investigated the prevalence of this condition in different breeds and found it is hard to establish a true picture of how many dogs in the general population are affected. A study by VetCompass compared the risks of common disorders through analysing records from veterinary practices across the UK in 2016 and compared 2,781 French Bulldogs with 21,850 non-French Bulldogs, 2,662 English Bulldogs alongside 22,039 non-English Bulldogs, and 4,308 Pugs with 16,218 non-Pugs². This study found BOAS affected 5.5% of French Bulldogs, 4.2% of Bulldogs and 6.6% of Pugs. However, there are caveats in that it is known that BOAS has become normalised and may not be picked up during a general examination.

More recent Kennel Club data, from The Kennel Club/University of Cambridge Respiratory Function Grading Scheme, varies with 15% of French Bulldogs, 18% of Bulldogs and 21% of Pugs being graded as having clinically significant/severe disease. Proportions clinically affected were 60% of Pugs, 46% of French Bulldogs and 40% of Bulldogs³. Both sets of data are most likely lower than many perceive, however regardless of this, the popular brachycephalic breeds remain 20 times more likely to suffer from BOAS than other breeds of dog, so it is a health issue that The Kennel Club takes very seriously. It is also important for owners to be aware that they can change factors that influence their dog's risk, such as through correct exercise and diet, which is important considering the VetCompass data also showed 10% of Bulldogs to be clinically obese.

Eye conditions

Due to the head shape of some flat-faced

dogs, their eyes may be more at risk of injury or reduced tear production, both of which can lead to painful ulcers on the surface of their eyes.

Skin issues

Some brachycephalic dogs may have an excess of skin, which creates folds, especially around the front of the face and tail pocket. These folds can make a warm, moist environment that can cause bacteria and yeast to grow, leading to infection, soreness and severe itching. Local infections may be prevented by owners if they are regularly cleaned.

Spinal problems

Some flat-faced dogs, specifically those with coiled, very short or absent tails, are at an increased risk of problems with their spines, causing it to curve or twist and cause them back pain. Breeders can avoid this by selecting dogs for breeding with longer and more mobile tails.

Teeth problems

Dogs with a shortened skull will often have a shortened jaw, but the number and size of teeth will stay the same. This can mean that their teeth become overcrowded, which can cause painful dental and gum problems.

Birthing difficulties

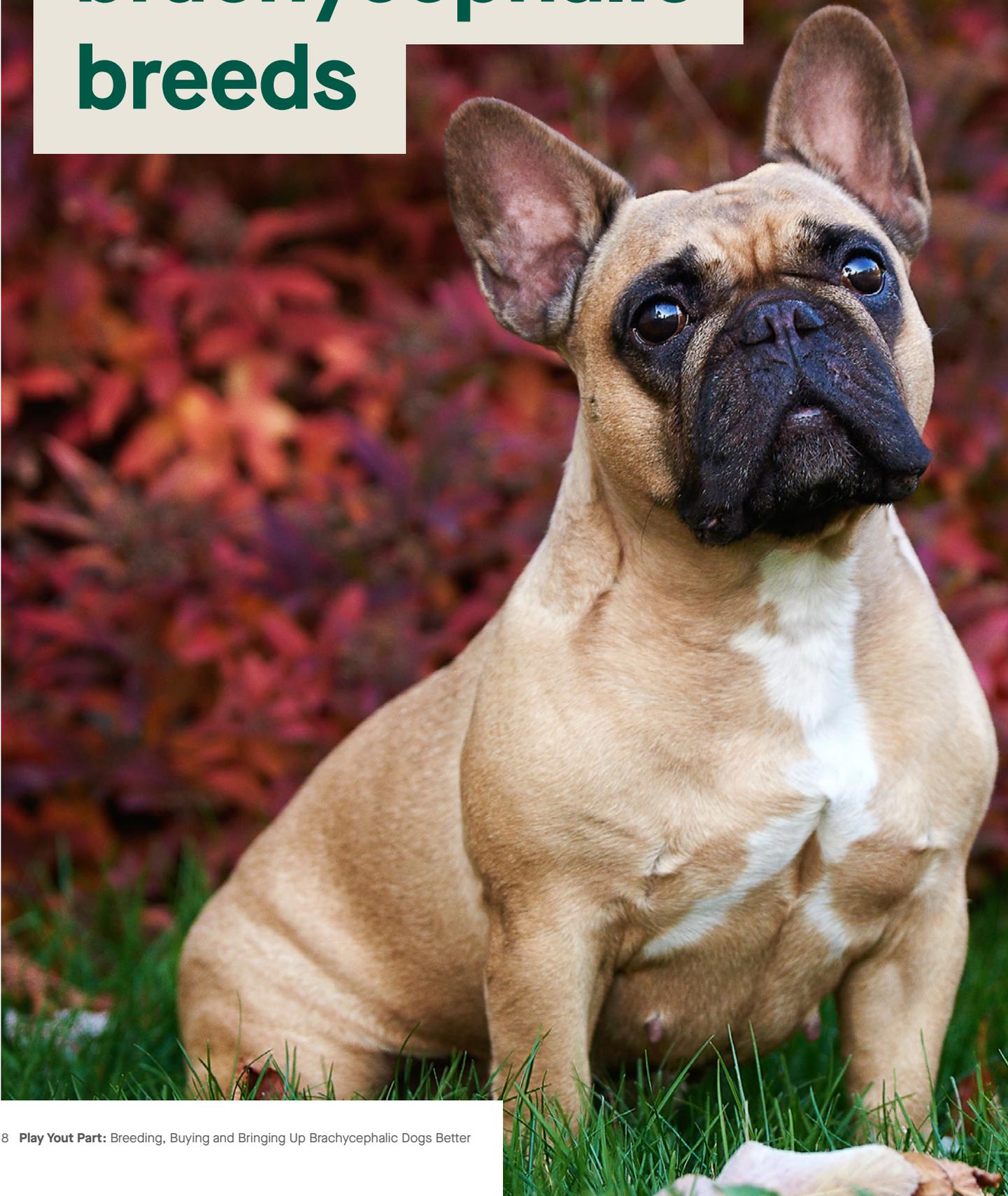
Breeds with a larger head can result in puppies that struggle to pass through the relatively narrow pelvises of their mother and may require medical or surgical intervention. Data in this area is very limited and therefore The Kennel Club has an online form for veterinary reporting of c-sections. Elective caesareans can be common due to owners choosing this instead of naturally whelping puppies. The mixture of factors makes accurate understanding in this area difficult.

¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28763490/>

² VetCompass data [French Bulldogs differ to other dogs in the UK in propensity for many common disorders: a VetCompass study | Canine Medicine and Genetics | Full Text \(biomedcentral.com\)](#)
[English Bulldogs in the UK: a VetCompass study of their disorder predispositions and protections | Canine Medicine and Genetics | Full Text \(biomedcentral.com\)](#)

³ The Kennel Club Breed Health Survey 2020. The survey was of 12,025 dogs, of which 853 were affected by BOAS.

Demand for popular brachycephalic breeds



Brachycephalic dogs are popular pets, with Pugs, Bulldogs and French Bulldogs accounting for over two million dogs in the UK.

The Kennel Club registers approximately one third of the UK's Pug, Bulldog and French Bulldog population. These breeds have dramatically increased in popularity since 2010, particularly the French Bulldog, whose registrations have increased by 764% in the last 10 years. However, our registration data suggests popularity has peaked and there is now a decline in demand.

The problems with popularity

Many of the problems associated with French Bulldogs, Pugs and Bulldogs are not recent but have been exacerbated by their popularity. A high surge in demand for these dogs has meant that responsible breeders, who prioritise health, have not been able to produce enough puppies for the increasing market demand. Instead, their popularity has been exploited by commercially motivated puppy farmers and inexperienced breeders keen to produce a litter for a profit. Buying a puppy from a breeder with a lack of knowledge on how to carefully avoid complex health issues, ones that prioritise profits over accountability, and even those who breed intentionally for “cute” exaggerations, has resulted in lower welfare standards of breeding and the resulting welfare crisis we see today.

Criminal connections

In some instances, the high prices for some examples of these dogs, have led to connections between dog breeding and organised crime. Penalties for illegal dog breeding and smuggling are far lower than for drug dealing and human trafficking, so

it has become an easier and profitable trade for criminals to become involved with. Some breeders and dealers are already operating illegally and selling puppies for significant sums, which leads us to believe that legislation alone is unlikely to solve the current health crisis amongst brachycephalic dogs⁴.

Has the problem peaked?

Whilst there is no doubt that some brachycephalic breeds remain popular, it seems that their popularity has peaked and may now be in decline. According to the most recent Kennel Club registration data (at the time of writing, in 2023), Labradors (traditionally the most popular breed in the UK) continue to have more registrations than French Bulldogs. French Bulldog registrations declined last year by 28% with 15,114 registered in the first half of 2023, compared with 21,058 in the corresponding period in 2022. Bulldog registrations declined by 35% with 6,010 registered in January-June 2022 compared to 3,892 in January-June 2023. Pug registration numbers also appear to be plummeting, with January-June 2023 seeing 35% fewer Pug registrations than for January-June 2022 (1,170 compared to 1,794).

Pets4Homes also concluded in August 2023 that brachycephalic breeds are in decline, with the number of French bulldogs re-homed in the first half of 2023 down by 47.6% on the first half of last year. Similarly, the number of English bulldogs being re-homed has fallen by 49.6%.

⁴ [Neil Mackay's Big Read: The inside story on how organised crime gangs took over Scotland's illegal trade in puppies | HeraldScotland.](#)

The impact of breed bans

Concerns about the health of Pugs, Bulldogs and French Bulldogs have led to calls for them to be completely banned from being bred. But would this sort of legislation be effective in the UK?

Would a breed ban work?

We believe that any calls to ban brachycephalic breeds across the UK would put in excess of two million pet dogs (and their owners) in jeopardy and, as such, would be completely unenforceable, raising questions such as:

- Would all 'illegal' dogs be seized and spayed/neutered/euthanised? If so, how could this be enforced, and it be ensured that the welfare of those dogs would not be compromised? And who would be expected to pay for it?
- How would enforcement agencies be able to identify the breeds/types, and what resources would need to be in place to deal with the volume of pets and pet owners involved?
- How would rescue centres provide the resources required to deal with higher levels of abandonment as people sought to give up their dogs, either because of a ban or because of a fear of health issues or high vet costs in the future?
- Would a ban create a criminal/underground marketplace with no checks or balances or health requirements in place?

- Would a ban on certain breeds on health grounds create an assumption that breeds or types not on the 'banned' list are therefore healthy? This has been one of the downfalls of the breed-specific 1991 Dangerous Dogs Act, with experts agreeing: 'removing breed-specific legislation will remove the fallacy that some dogs are inherently dangerous and others are safe⁵'.

The effects of fickle fashion

Anecdotally, and along with all other mainstream dog organisations, we believe that a big driver of breed demand is fashion and celebrity culture, as opposed to dog showing or other dog related hobbies. It is difficult to ban 'fashionable' dogs because fashions and trends change and move on. There has already been a very significant decline in Pug registrations⁶, with a over 50% fall in registrations in 2022 compared with 2012, but there will, no doubt, soon be a new popular breed on the horizon. Introducing ban after ban is not sustainable. It is our view that legislation should not target an ever-updating list of breeds, especially as any dog, if bred intentionally for unhealthy extremes, can be unhealthy.





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Learning from previous examples

Our views on banning brachycephalic breeds are in line with views on the 1991 Dangerous Dogs Act, with an overwhelming 98% of expert behaviourists suggesting that adding more breeds to the banned list would have no effect on reducing dog attacks⁷. The Act is acknowledged to have served to drive the breeding of these dogs underground and may have further fuelled the health and welfare crisis of illegally bred and imported dogs. This has led to large numbers of unregistered animals whose owners, breeders and potential buyers can't easily be reached or influenced.

Similarly, if breeding bans were to be introduced, the breeds themselves would not be banned, it would just be forbidden to breed them. If illegally bred dogs were still owned by people, there would be very little that authorities could realistically do. Looking at examples from other countries, for many years it was forbidden to own exotic animals in Norway and yet there were more than 100,000 in the country until the ban was lifted a few years ago.

⁵ Dog Bites: what's breed got to do with it? Battersea Dogs & Cats Home 2016

⁶ See Appendix 1

⁷ Dog-bites-whats-breed-got-to-do-with-it.pdf (bdch.org.uk)

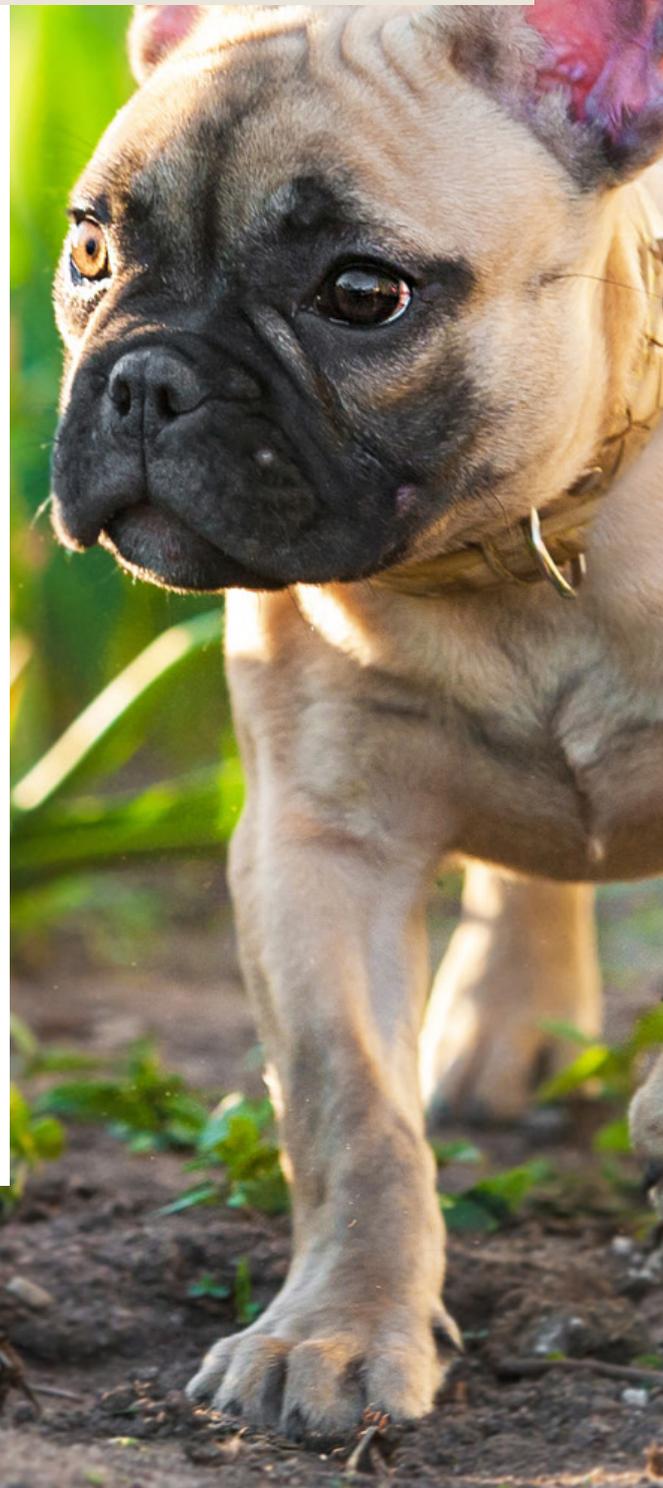
What we do to improve the health of brachycephalic dogs

The Kennel Club continue to do more than any other dog registry or welfare organisation to introduce initiatives that deal directly with improving the health of popular brachycephalic dogs.

As a profit-for-purpose organisation, we are able to fund the necessary research to do this, and although there is no one single solution, we have a number of measures in place to help breeders, puppy buyers, dog owners and dog show judges:

Research

The Kennel Club Charitable Trust, an independent charity since 1987, aims to make a difference to dogs in fields of science and canine welfare. It funds vital research at the Royal Veterinary College that continues to reveal the top health conditions for different breeds and how prevalent those conditions are. The Charitable Trust has also donated approximately £700,000 to develop ground-breaking research at the University of Cambridge that helps us understand more about brachycephalic health (further information in previous section). This research has enabled us to produce better breeding resources and introduce the Respiratory Function Grading Scheme.



Health Schemes

The Respiratory Function Grading Scheme (RFG Scheme)⁸ can be used by breeders of Pugs, Bulldogs and French Bulldogs to have their dog's breathing assessed and graded. This scheme advises owners if their dog is affected by BOAS and gives guidance to breeders on how to lower the risk of producing affected puppies, allowing breeders to avoid breeding from affected dogs and select their healthiest breeding dogs, which reduces the likelihood of producing puppies from being affected by BOAS⁹. As a result, since the scheme began, 3,106 puppies have been born that had two RFG tested parents and 13,125 puppies have been born that had one RFG tested parent. The Cambridge University Kennel Club Respiratory Function Grading Scheme is recognised worldwide and is licensed by Kennel Clubs in 11 countries across the world.

Breed standards

Kennel Club breed standards (a written description of each breed) make it clear that physical exaggerations that cause health issues are not acceptable and should not be rewarded at dog shows. The breed standards for the French Bulldog, Pug and Bulldog were all updated recently (November 2021, December 2022 and February 2023, respectively), using evidence from Kennel Club Charitable Trust funded research at the University of Cambridge. The changes to these standards help to discourage the breeding of dogs with characteristics that were found to be associated with health issues. The impact of changes to breed standards is however limited given that many potential dog owners will not look up the breed standard prior to purchasing a puppy.

Progress by breed clubs

Breed Clubs have developed their own national breed specific health schemes¹⁰; and they can use these to monitor the health

of their breeds, using data from dog owners. The schemes address ears, eyes, heart, nostrils, breathing (via the RFG Scheme), hindlegs, spine, and temperament. As of April 2021, nearly 4,000 dog owners of Bulldogs, French Bulldogs and Pugs had taken part in a scheme and collected data to use to make improvements.¹¹

Vet checks at dog shows

Our online resource, Breed Watch, helps judges to identify and reward healthy dogs. We also have vet checks at championship dog shows for breeds identified as having health problems related to exaggerated features. At Crufts 2023 the Bulldog that won 'Best of Breed' failed its vet check and as such was not allowed to enter the 'Best in Group' stage of the show, highlighting that the checks and balances in place ensure that health and welfare takes priority.

Collaboration

In 2016, The Kennel Club established the Brachycephalic Working Group, made up of representatives from breed clubs, academic bodies, veterinary associations and animal welfare organisations. The group recently committed to a new five-year strategy to improve brachycephalic dog health for current and future generations. In conjunction with breed clubs, we have also put in place Breed Health and Conservation Plans, which use research to identify key health issues for each breed and create an action plan to improve the health of these breeds. The breed clubs of the more popular brachycephalic breeds have been proactive with initiatives already in place, and were the first to participate in this project.

⁹ [Respiratory Function Grading Scheme | Health | Kennel Club \(thekennelclub.org.uk\)](https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health/respiratory-function-grading-scheme)

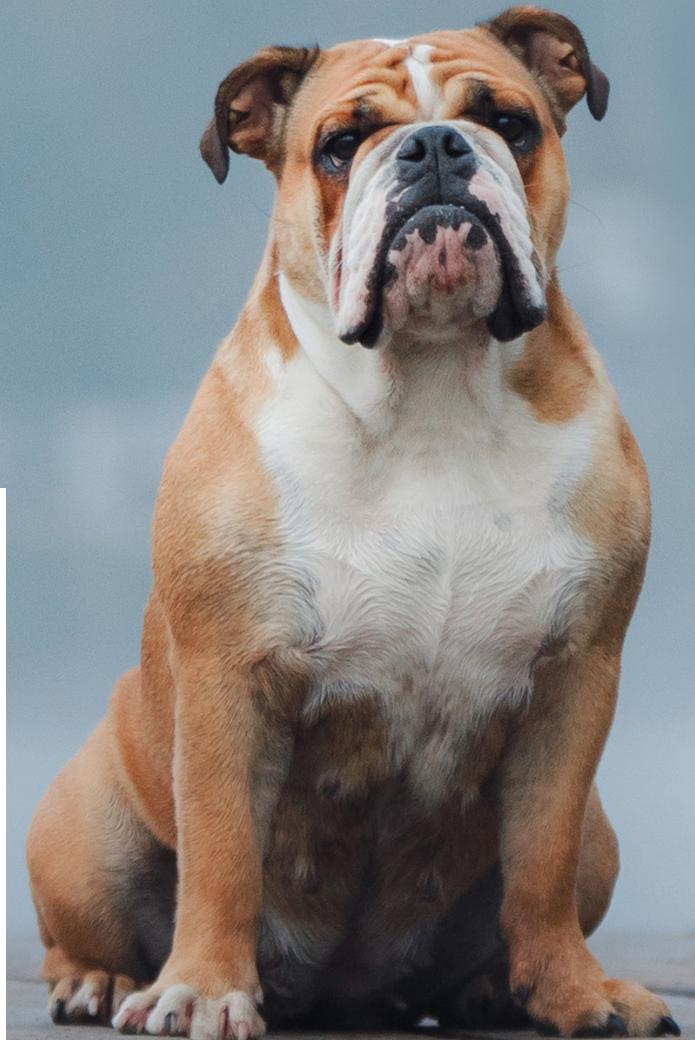
¹⁰ [Health Scheme Information - The French Bulldog Club of England; Affordable Pug 5 Star Health Scheme-Pug Breed Council \(pughealth.org.uk\); Health Scheme - The Northern Pug Dog Club; Health Scheme - Bulldog Breed Council](#)

¹¹ 1,241 Bulldog owners; 2,151 French Bulldog Owners; 468 Pug owners

Respiratory Function Grading Scheme – how it works in practice

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All grades have an expiry date and dogs should be assessed every two years for their lifetime.



The RFG Scheme, detailed above, is currently the only scheme of its kind. It is a practical, cost effective scheme that is open to all, without any reliance on already stretched enforcement agencies.

The scheme enables vets specifically trained in BOAS to advise owners if their dog is affected by BOAS and gives guidance to breeders on how to lower the risk of producing affected puppies. An assessment form is completed by the regional assessor with a copy given to the dog owner and The Kennel Club for publication including on the Health Test Results Finder.

A dog is assessed using a stethoscope to listen to breathing whilst calm and relaxed. The dog is then encouraged to move around an exercise area at a quick pace for three minutes, either by the vet or the dog owner, and following this the vet will then listen to the dog's breathing again and will use a list of criteria to give a grade.

What does each grade mean?

Grade 0: The dog is clinically unaffected with no respiratory signs of BOAS.

Grade 1: The dog is clinically unaffected but does have mild respiratory signs linked to BOAS that do not affect their exercise performance.

Grade 2: The dog is clinically affected and has moderate respiratory signs of BOAS that should be monitored and may require veterinary treatment.

Grade 3: The dog is clinically affected and has severe respiratory signs of BOAS and should be seen by a vet for a thorough veterinary examination with treatment. It is not recommended to breed from grade 3 dogs. Moreover all grades have an expiry date and dogs should be assessed every two years for their lifetime.

Breeding advice

		Dog One (sire or dam)			
RFG Grade for each dog		Grade 0	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Dog Two (sire or dam)	Grade 0				
	Grade 1				
	Grade 2				
	Grade 3				

Green: the lowest risk of breeding dogs affected by BOAS.

Amber: a higher risk of producing puppies that may grow up to be affected by BOAS.

Red: a mating which has a high risk of producing puppies that may grow up to be affected by BOAS. These matings are not recommended. Producing puppies affected by BOAS has a serious impact on their health and welfare. A mating which may produce affected puppies should never knowingly be carried out.

7

Our recommendations for improving brachycephalic health



Whilst many turn to us as The Kennel Club to do more to improve the health of popular brachycephalic breeds, it is unfortunately not that simple. As a registry, we register only one third of all puppies born. If we didn't register them, then either another organisation would, or they wouldn't be registered at all.

As there will always be a demand for brachycephalic type dogs, it is imperative that we improve how they are bred and how they are cared for throughout their lives. Not only is it vital that we improve the health and welfare of these dogs on an individual level, but it is essential that we also make a change at a population level. As well as making this a priority ourselves, we are calling on the Government, breeders, dog owners, vets, rehoming centres, insurance companies, dog show organisers and online sellers, to play a part, and to assist us in our mission to ensure dogs are bred responsibly and live healthy, happy lives.

Our recommendations are as follows:

1. Government

We are calling on UK Government's to play a part in improving the supply of healthy puppies and reduce the demand for poorly bred dogs by:

i) **Introducing a central licensing unit for local authorities** - there is an inconsistent approach to breeder licensing and a lack of specialist knowledge. Many local authority inspectors lack awareness of the nuanced health issues related to brachycephalic dogs, and the availability of breeding tools to mitigate these issues. A central unit (one in England, one in Scotland, and one in Wales) would enhance the implementation of respective breeding regulations, by improving understanding of breed/type specific health issues and how these can be addressed. The welfare aspect of current regulations in each jurisdiction are robust, but enforcement is poor which is why so many high volume, low welfare breeders continue to operate under the radar. This needs to be improved prior to assessing whether further legislation is necessary.

- ii) **Introducing mandatory contracts for breeders** – contracts would provide puppy buyers with confidence their breeder is legitimate and would encourage breeders to carry out necessary health and RFG testing, as they could face legal consequences from puppy buyers if they were found to be at fault for future health issues.
- iii) **Updating the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs under the Animal Welfare Act and Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006** – to include additional practical information and signposting on how to look after brachycephalic dogs and steps that should be taken in relation to breeding e.g. completing an RFG assessment and other safeguards against producing dogs with extremes of conformation.
- iv) **Delivering an evidence based, human behaviour change campaign to reduce demand for brachycephalic dogs and prohibit the unnecessary or inappropriate use of brachycephalic dogs in advertising** - it is well documented that brachycephalic dogs have complex health issues, yet they continue to remain desirable. The limitations of guidance and regulations are that they can attempt to dictate behaviour without educating and changing views. There needs to be a shift in how/why people buy dogs.

To support these asks, The Kennel Club will continue to:

- v) Work (through the Pet Advertising Advisory Group) with online marketplaces to improve and increase the educational messaging for those seeking brachycephalic dogs.
- vi) Promote and encourage people to do more research prior to buying a brachycephalic dog, including taking up options such as pre-purchase consultations with vets.
- vii) Continue to work with partner stakeholders, including the Brachycephalic Working Group, to educate the public on the specific risks of buying popular brachycephalic dogs.

2. Dog breeders

Dog breeders should play their part to ensure they breed healthy puppies. We are calling on dog breeders to:

- i) **Increase the use and impact of health testing**
 - The Kennel Club/University of Cambridge Respiratory Function Grading (RFG) Scheme is vital to improve the respiratory function of Pugs, Bulldogs and French Bulldogs. More breeders must make use of this scheme in order for it to have an impact at a population level.
- ii) **Make use of puppy contracts** - this requirement on dog breeders could be embedded in an updated Statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs. We believe that contracts should be compulsory, not least because it's an easy means for puppy buyers to see that a breeder is genuine i.e. if there is no contract, this should be a red flag to a potential puppy buyer. Puppy contracts are available to download free of charge and so could be easily used by a first-time, one-off breeder.
- iii) **Provide dog owners information on how to care for their dog** - including specific information relating to managing a brachycephalic dog and alerting owners to potential health problems. Four in 10 breeders of brachycephalic type dogs do this already, but a requirement could be embedded in an updated Code of Practice¹².

To support these asks The Kennel Club will:

- iv) Incentivise the use of health testing, by reducing our puppy registrations fees for fully health tested litters or charging more for those who are not tested.
- v) Mandate that breed clubs include a code of ethics for members in order that they have to health test brachycephalic breeds.
- vi) Monitor the impact of the decision made by the Irish Kennel Club, which from 2024 will put in place endorsements that brachycephalic breeds are, "not to be bred from", which will be lifted only once the required health tests have been undertaken.
- vii) Work with the veterinary profession to improve the infrastructure around health testing to ensure that every breeder has access to health testing, locally and at an affordable price.

As well as this we will continue to:

- viii) Offer subsidised or free health tests at our events.
- ix) Fund the development of screening and health resources to support a good quality of life for French Bulldogs, Pugs and Bulldogs.
- x) Educate breeders on what health testing is available and how to interpret the results to ensure breeding decisions put health first.
- xi) Encourage participation in the Respiratory Function Grading Scheme and improve accessibility across the country.
- xii) Support the Pug, Bulldog and French Bulldog Breed Clubs in their rollout of breed specific health testing schemes.
- xiii) Encourage our own customers and puppy buyers to use a puppy contract or similar contract whereby guarantees are in place for puppy buyers.

3. Dog owners and puppy buyers

Health problems linked to brachycephaly can be inherited, however, how a dog is looked after during its life can either considerably mitigate the impact of these conditions or exacerbate them further. For instance, brachycephalic breathing problems can be affected by the dog's weight and physical condition. Dog owners and prospective dog owners have a part to play by:

- i) **Adequately researching breeds and types of dog they are interested in** and 'stop and think' before choosing a brachycephalic type dog.
- ii) **Self-certifying/declaring to a breeder that they have adequately researched health associated issues** and are knowledgeable as to how to mitigate health problems prior to acquisition.
- iii) **Ensuring they are up to date with information on how to care for their dogs** and undertake health assessments where relevant.

¹² The Kennel Club 'Be Puppy Wise' Survey 2022

To support these ask, The Kennel Club will:

- iv) Continue to educate owners and potential dog owners with breed-specific health information, encouraging annual veterinary health assessments, including continually managing the body condition score of the dog.
- v) Continue to promote the messaging of the Brachycephalic Working Group to 'Stop and Think' prior to acquisition.

4. Vets

The Kennel Club will not register any further puppies from a bitch that has had two c-sections but our efforts to date are hampered by some veterinary surgeons who are failing to report, even though they can do so without contravening patient confidentiality through Kennel Club registration clauses. Similarly, there is insufficient reporting on the RFG Scheme. Reporting from vets is important so that we gather more data and that evidence-based decisions are made (i.e., a vet might think a dog needs surgery but BOAS is complex and after the assessment, might show that's not what's required).

We are calling on vets to play their part by:

- i) **Recording with The Kennel Club all c-sections they perform on Kennel Club registered bitches** - this helps us enforce our regulations and track the proportion of Kennel Club registered breeding bitches that are undergoing c-sections.
- ii) **Increasing the number of Respiratory Function Grading Scheme assessments carried out and to formally become 'RFG Assessors'** - to ensure more dogs are tested.
- iii) **Reporting on our Respiratory Function Grading Scheme before and after BOAS surgery** - in order to see at what point surgery is necessary and report corrective surgery to the dog owner's local authority. This would allow them to be aware of health issues that could have implications for licensing requirements.
- iv) **Reporting corrective surgery that alters a dog's natural conformation to The Kennel Club** - a dog that has needed surgery in this way will not be allowed in the show ring as it would not be a naturally healthy example of the breed.



The Kennel Club will continue to educate owners and potential dog owners with breed-specific health information.

- v) **Promoting a Brachycephalic Health Assessment veterinary consultation framework** - to help improve the welfare of the current population of brachycephalic dogs, and inform breeding decisions.

To support these asks The Kennel Club will:

- vi) Encourage vets to discuss breeding and health testing with clients who are breeding or thinking about breeding their dogs. We will provide vets with a hub of online information to direct their clients to.
- vii) Continue to run educational and CPD events for vets and vet students.

5. Re-homing centres

Rescue centres are busier as a result of people abandoning their dogs because of poor breeding and higher vet bills. As they care for many brachycephalic dogs going through the rehoming process we would call on rescue centres to play their part by:

- i) **RFG testing Pugs, Bulldogs and French Bulldogs prior to surgery.**
- ii) **Reporting corrective surgery to The Kennel Club.**

6. Insurance companies

Insurance companies are less likely to incur vet bills from healthy dogs. Therefore we are calling on insurance companies to play their part by:

- i) **Providing dog owners who buy health tested puppies with cheaper insurance premiums to incentivise people to buy puppies responsibly.**

To support this ask the Kennel Club will:

- ii) Liaise with our insurance partners to explore reduced insurance premiums for health tested dogs.

7. Dog shows and registrations

While the role of dog shows in shaping the purchasing trends of the wider general public is minimal, they do provide a platform to educate breeders and the wider dog owning public. Crufts 2023 provided a good example of how dog shows are a positive lever for change given the high number of RFG tested dogs that took part; 50% of Bulldogs over a year, and 69% that have been bred from; 54% of Pugs over a year and 73% that have been bred from and 48% of French Bulldogs and 69% that have been bred from. This represents a significantly higher proportion of dogs that are RFG tested, at Crufts, compared to the general population of these breeds.

We are considering the measures that need to be in place at Crufts and other dog shows to protect the health and welfare of the dogs exhibited and further, to only promote the best ambassadors for those breeds. We are already well ahead of other European Kennel Clubs in this area and are currently working on the possible implementation of:

- i) **Introducing Crufts related entry criteria for Pugs, Bulldogs and French Bulldogs.**
- ii) **Additional veterinary check criteria** - to enable vets to be given the ability to fail a dog on additional criteria, and to consider random veterinary health checks at shows for any breed of concern.

- iii) **A review of mandatory training, guidance, and regulation applicable to judges.**

- iv) **More specific measuring and monitoring of conformational features** - such as nostrils, leg length, body condition, extremes of coat, extremes of skin and eye conformation to encourage greater attention to these areas.

- v) **A health supplement to the breed standard** - for some breeds, to be very clear on the health and welfare concerns for that breed and how they should not be rewarded in the show ring.

8. Online sales platforms

Given that the vast majority of prospective puppy buyers will look on the internet as their first port of call, the role of online marketplaces, such as 'Gumtree' and 'Pets4Homes', is becoming increasingly important, and they currently have no legal responsibility to operate responsibly. We are calling on online sales platforms to play a part in highlighting responsibly bred dogs by:

- i) **Providing prominent information/pop-ups about the issues that can be experienced with brachycephalic breeds and more information on what can be done to minimise those risks.**
- ii) **Highlighting those breeders who are RFG tested and health testing and using a puppy contract.**
- iii) **Ensuring litters from RFG and health tested parents are promoted at the top of listings and are clearly identified.**
- iv) **Providing perspective purchasers with core questions to ask the breeder, including specific questions in relation to brachycephalic breeds.**

To support these ask The Kennel Club will:

- i) Work with online puppy marketplaces to provide support for the above objective as our own 'Find A Puppy' website is unique in showing puppies with health tested parents.

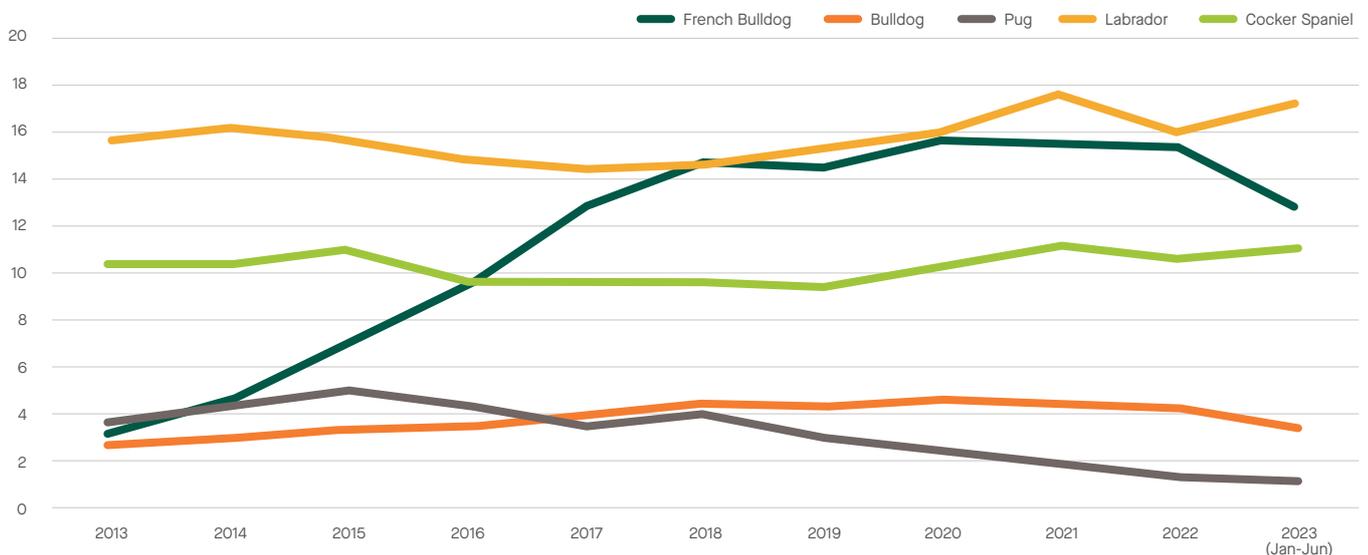


Crufts 2023 provided a good example of how dog shows are a positive lever for change.

Appendix 1

Registration statistics of Pugs, Bulldogs and French Bulldogs

% composition of Kennel Club registrations



	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 (Jan-Jun)
French Bulldog	6,990	9,670	14,607	21,470	30,887	36,785	33,661	39,266	54,074	42,538	15,109
Bulldog	5,769	5,958	6,960	7,785	9,450	10,665	9,922	11,594	15,403	11,667	3,892
Pug	8,071	9,245	10,087	10,048	8,071	9,742	6,751	6,033	6,122	3,451	1,170
Labrador	35,026	34,715	32,507	33,856	35,068	36,526	35,347	39,905	61,559	44,311	20,393
Cocker Spaniel	22,943	22,366	22,577	21,854	23,317	23,927	21,663	25,565	38,910	29,491	13,036
Overall registrations	223,770	214,923	207,268	227,708	243,290	250,611	232,555	250,659	349,013	277,114	118,294

Labradors and Cocker Spaniels added for comparison.

*Also worth noting the 'pandemic puppy boom' / The Kennel Club CRM implementation in 2020 resulted in non-comparative data/data we need to interpret carefully. Overall, Kennel Club registrations increased by 40% from 2020 to 2021.

Appendix 2

Puppy Contract example

[The Puppy Contract - for responsible puppy reeding and buying.](#)

[The Puppy Contract.pdf](#)

Appendix 3

Respiratory Function Grading Scheme results

Grade 0: Your dog is clinically unaffected and is currently free of respiratory signs of BOAS. If your dog is under 2 years old, we suggest they have an annual health check with their own vet, as BOAS can develop later in life

Grade 1: Your dog is clinically unaffected but does have mild respiratory signs linked to BOAS. These signs do not affect their exercise performance. If your dog is under 2 years old, we suggest they have an annual health check with their own vet, as BOAS can develop later in life

Grade 2: Your dog is clinically affected and has moderate respiratory signs of BOAS that should be monitored and may require veterinary treatment

Grade 3: Your dog is clinically affected and has severe respiratory signs of BOAS and should be seen by your own vet for a thorough veterinary examination with treatment. We do not recommend that you breed from your dog

These grades have an expiry date and dogs should be assessed every two years for their lifetime, or until you stop using them for breeding.

Breed	Grade 0	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Total Tested
French Bulldog	45.5%	39.3%	13.5%	1.7%	1164
Bulldog	33.1%	48.7%	16.0%	2.2%	807
Pug	25.6%	53.0%	17.3%	4.1%	485

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