

Medivet to rethink breed policy after row

By Matthew Limb

MEDIVET is to review its approach to supporting dog breeding associations.

The decision follows criticism about the company's financial backing of the French Bulldog Club of England.

Its donation to the club came to light earlier this week following criticism about a post the company published on its LinkedIn page on 15 December. The post said the company was the new main sponsor of the French Bulldog Club of England for the next five years.

Some vets reacted to the post, expressing surprise that the company would back a club associated with brachycephaly. The post was taken down by Medivet on 18 December.

When contacted by *Vet Record*, Medivet admitted that the LinkedIn notification was an 'incorrect' posting by a new member of its marketing team.

A spokesperson for Medivet Group Ltd said the company donated £1250 to the club in August 2015. It was not a sponsorship deal but the breed club agreed to promote the company on its website and at its shows.

The company said the donation was made with the intention of collaborating with the club on its health scheme, which promotes avoiding breeding from French bulldogs affected by certain breed-related illnesses.

Now, Medivet, which employs 650 staff in the UK, has pledged to review its policies for backing breeding clubs.

Chief executive Arnold Levy said: 'We will be reviewing our policies surrounding the support for such breeding associations in light of the sensitivities, and welcome further discussion within our industry to guide our view.'

Both organisations downplayed the 'sponsorship' agreement.

Levy said: 'Medivet is acutely aware of the sensitivities surrounding brachycephalic breeds and fully supports the position and work

of the Brachycephalic Working Group (BWG), which encompasses a coalition of vets, academics, dog breeding organisations and animal charities, in promoting the health and welfare of brachycephalic breeds.'

Levy said the firm's pet health and welfare principles were in keeping with the BVA's guidance on breed-related conditions and brachycephalic breeds, more specifically.

Penny Rankine-Parsons, president of the French Bulldog Club of England, said Medivet's agreement with the club had been 'blown out of proportion' and felt some criticism had been 'malicious'.

She told *Vet Record*: 'We advertised their services and we got a bit of money to put back into our breed. That was it, and it's been made out to be something terrible.'

She said the breeding club had used some of the donation for rosettes and hosting a special bulldog event in October 2017. Some had

also been used to support its health scheme, which includes testing for brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome.

Rankine-Parsons, who sits on the BWG, said: 'We are doing everything we can to address health problems in French bulldogs. We work so hard and it is terrible for Medivet to get lambasted for something they did two years ago for us.'

Martin Whitehead, an advanced

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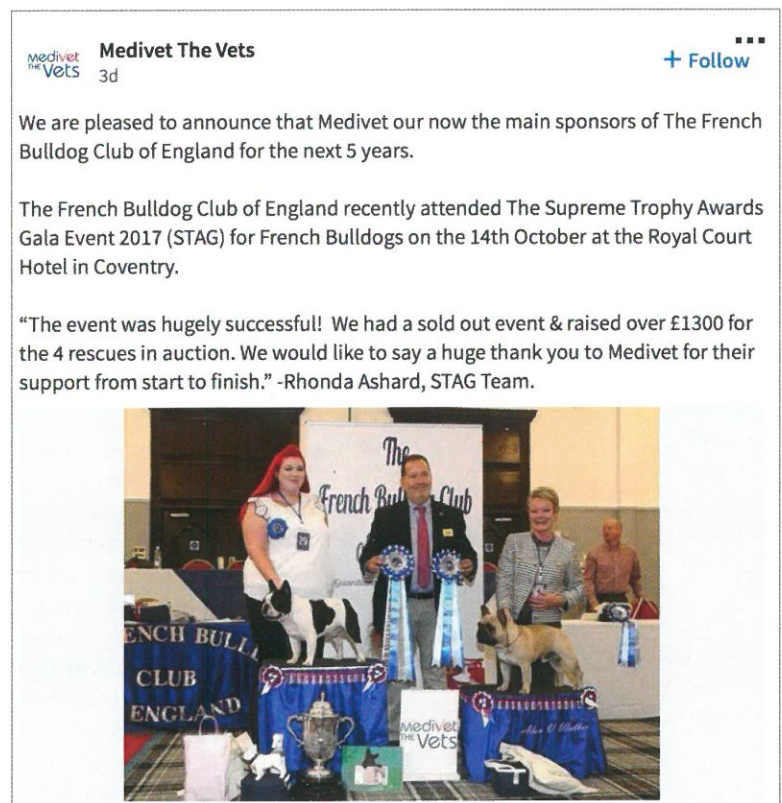
practitioner in small animal medicine based in Oxfordshire, said: 'It does look bad that Medivet has a prominent logo on the front of the French Bulldog Club of England.'

'It gives the wrong impression and makes it look like vets as a whole are supporting that breed.'

He said Medivet should withdraw the logo. 'It's not necessarily wrong to support a breed club but you might want to choose a breed that doesn't have the really obvious health problems that a brachycephalic does.'

Danny Chambers, who runs the Veterinary Voices Facebook group, said reaction to the post highlighted how much the veterinary mood was shifting in respect of brachycephalic breeds.

He said: 'It is encouraging to hear Medivet are working with the health scheme for French bulldogs and that they support the position and work of the BWG and the BVA's guidance on breed-related conditions.'



Screengrab of the post on LinkedIn by Medivet