

News & Reports

Welsh vets lead way with brachy position

By Matthew Limb

A WELSH vet practice has received 'amazing' support from within and outside the UK after adopting a public position on brachycephalic dog breeding.

Valleyvets, which operates across four sites in and around Cardiff, published a statement on its website last week in response to a noticeable 'fashion' for brachycephalic breeds.

Director Mark Evans said colleagues were concerned that the huge current demand for brachycephalic puppies was causing a veterinary health crisis and felt they had to act.

He told *Vet Record*: 'We knew what we were doing was maybe a little bit bold but we didn't quite expect the reaction we've had and the volume of it.'

The statement, drawn up by the clinical team, says the practice will no longer offer pre-mate tests for brachycephalic bitches or treat infertility in these breeds. It will no longer condone the use of these breeds in any form of advertising.

However, it will continue to offer veterinary care to any brachycephalic puppy or dog already owned and loved by a pet 'parent'.

The statement (see <http://bit.ly/2BooLSg>) draws on documents issued by the Brachycephalic Working Group (BWG), the BVA and British Small Animal Veterinary Association. It also follows the publication of an open letter last week by the BWG, urging businesses to stop using images of flat-faced dogs to promote brands and products (*VR*, 16 December 2017, vol 181, pp 636-637).

Evans said he hoped the statement would both raise awareness and play a part in discouraging people from buying a 'Frenchie' or a bulldog puppy for Christmas.

He said the statement did not aim to discriminate against any animal



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but stressed highly fashionable brachycephalic dogs had a 'long list of problems that humans could do something about if we really put our effort into it'.

The policy has attracted interest on social media and has won full support from professionals, said Evans. However, he said the public's reaction was evenly split between positive and negative comments. Feedback had included some 'nasty and abusive' comments, but none from existing clients.

Evans said: 'We just felt that until

people like the Kennel Club and the BWG have reported back on ways to try to improve breed standards, and reduce the health problems we're seeing in these breeds, it was wrong for us to do anything to positively promote the production of more puppies.

'We'd be happy to review that in a year or two years' time but I think it needs a little bit of time maybe for the fashion to calm down and for the authorities that know what they're doing to try to come up with advice for the breeders out there.'

BVA COUNCIL AGREES POSITION ON BRACHYCEPHALIC ANIMALS

THE BVA has approved a position statement on brachycephalic dogs.

The statement says the veterinary professions should act together to influence the reduction of unhealthy dogs with brachycephalic conformation and improve health and wellbeing outcomes for the current generation of brachycephalic dogs through consistent messaging.

It was approved at a council meeting last week after members heard that professional concern over the issue – and its prominence in the media – demanded urgent action.

Gudrun Ravetz, BVA senior vice-president, said: 'It's vital we have a statement.'

Speaking in favour of the policy, Robin Hargreaves, a former BVA president, said: 'I think we do need to act now. In practice, I've never seen a change like this in the last 30 years.'