



BRACHYCEPHALIC WORKING GROUP
ANNUAL SUMMARY REPORT OF ACTIVITY DURING 2018

The (Brachycephalic Working Group) BWG has had a very busy 2018 with three full meetings as well as many other face-to-face and virtual meetings of the subgroups. Some of the key activities and progress is shown here in relation to the relevant action items. More information on BWG is available at www.ukbwg.org.uk.

Action 1: *The Kennel Club to develop Breed Health and Conservation Plans for several brachycephalic breeds, including Bulldog, French Bulldog, Pekingese and Pug. Bespoke plans for each breed to be developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including breed clubs, researchers, Breed Health Coordinators, and, for brachycephalic breeds, in consultation with the BWG. Such plans should also be made available to breeders of puppies that will not be registered with the Kennel Club so that the plans have the greatest possible welfare impact.*

[KC Breed Health & Conservation Plans \(BHCPs\)](#)

The BHCPs are a comprehensive plan made up of scientific evidence collated from a range of sources including insurance data, peer-reviewed literature, canine health scheme reports, and breed health surveys. To date the following brachycephalic breed plans have been completed: Bulldog, French Bulldog, Pugs, Boston Terrier, Boxer, Bullmastiff, Griffon Bruxellois, Pekingese, King Charles Spaniel, and Japanese Chin. The [French Bulldog BHCP](#) has been released to the wider public while the remaining plans for the main brachycephalic breeds remain within the relevant breed clubs, and are yet to be openly released although summaries of actions have been provided to BWG. The Kennel Club will recommend their release as part of the agreed consultation with the BWG to ensure wider support from the breadth of stakeholder groups is given to the action plans established within them for these breeds.

Action 2: *For BWG members to review the breed standards for brachycephalic breeds and recommend any changes for consideration by relevant breed health co-*

ordinators and breed clubs, the Breed Standards & Conformation Sub-group of the KC Dog Health Group and the KC Breed Standards and Studbook Sub-committee.

Breed Standards

A sub-group formed from members within the BWG have proposed amendments for the Pug, Bulldog and French Bulldog standards based on a wide review of available scientific evidence. The French Bulldog amendments are currently undergoing approval, with the Bulldog and Pug under final review from the breed clubs. The KC Breed Standards and Studbook Sub-committee have indicated that they will consider any changes proposed by the breed clubs, whilst the Breed Standards & Conformation Sub-group of the KC Dog Health Group may consider proposing changes to the breed standards providing there is compelling evidence to support changes.

Action 3: *The BWG to review points of concern for brachycephalic category 2 and 3 breeds, including exaggerated conformation and “difficulty breathing”, and make recommendations to the Breed Standards and Conformation Sub-Group of the KC Dog Health Group.*

The BWG are continuing to monitor the Breed Watch points of concern for brachycephalic category 2 and 3 breeds, and make recommendations to the Breed Standards and Conformation Sub-Group of the KC Dog Health Group as necessary. This will be done in consideration and with reference to any changes that the Kennel Club are made to the breed standards. Further consideration will also be given to any information or data that results from the Breed Health and Conservation Plans that are currently being undertaken by the Kennel Club.

Action 4a: *BWG to understand and review current judge training (including continuing development) and practice, including the use of in-show health assessments such as exercise tolerance tests, with opportunity to make recommendations to the Breed Standards & Conformation Sub-group of the KC Dog Health Group.*

Action 4b: *BWG to review the current vet-check systems in place at major dog shows, with opportunity to make recommendations to the Breed Standards & Conformation Sub-group of the KC Dog Health Group.*

The Judges' Training and Vet Check sub-group

A sub-group formed from members within the BWG have attended a variety of dog shows to speak to vets, judges and breeders about how the current process works

and will be attending a Breed Appreciation Day in May 2019 to better understand how training for judges is provided. The sub-group is working closely with the Kennel Club to create a set of recommendations aimed at ensuring that the relevant issues surrounding brachycephalic health and welfare are encompassed in both judges training and vet checks at championship shows.

Action 5: *BVA to investigate brachycephalic health scheme with breed health coordinators and Kennel Club, informed by other BWG members.*

Launch of the [University of Cambridge/ KC Respiratory Function Grading Scheme](#)

The scheme was launched on the 2nd February 2019, focusing on providing breeders and owners of French Bulldogs, Bulldogs and Pugs with advice and guidance on whether or not to breed from their dogs. To date, 18 regionally approved assessors have been specially trained in grading these breeds, with nationwide accessibility. It is hoped once further research is available this could possibly be extended to further breeds. Now the scheme is active, BWG members are working to promote this scheme to breeders and the puppy-buying public to ensure maximum awareness and uptake.

Action 6: *BWG to communicate with companies and marketing bodies to seek commitments that they will not use brachycephalic breeds in their designs and imagery.*

i) Open letter sent to advertising bodies

A letter agreed by the group was shared to advise advertising bodies on the use of domestic animals in advertising and the media, specifically with regard to brachycephalic breeds, with the aim to stem the mass demand for these breeds.

ii) Raising the issues associated with brachycephaly

Each individual stakeholder of the BWG has been working together to strengthen the message to potential puppy buyers, ensuring that the public are aware of the risks associated with buying a poorly bred puppy of these breeds, and where to seek a responsibly bred puppy instead. This includes endorsing and relaunching the Puppy Contract and sharing information through press campaigns and social media.

iii) Disney film *Patrick the Pug*

Members of the group advised the producers of Disney's Patrick the Pug, with supporting educational social media content and videos, as well as leaflets for the public on how to buy a healthy Pug puppy responsibly, in line with the film's release.

Action 7: *Following 2017 launch with the Kennel Club, ensure Puppy Contract and Puppy Information Pack are prominent in BWG member communication channels,*

e.g. websites, social media and any print or broadcast media output on puppy-buying.

BWG continues to widely promote the use of the [Puppy Contract](#). The new-look Puppy Contract website was launched in October, and the contract was downloaded more than 1,000 times in the first month. The resources are being used by breeders and buyers alike – there were around 4,500 downloads of the factsheet for breeders in the first month.

Action 8: *Veterinary members of BWG to collaboratively undertake activities at the individual, community and national levels (as outlined above) to influence demand for healthy dogs.*

External Organisation Liaison

Members of BWG have been approached by organisations worldwide requesting information on initiatives that the BWG has taken to date with a view to these organisations replicating this in their own country. There is also scope for a European group to be established to tackle health and welfare concerns on an international level. Bodies such as [FECAVA](#) and [WSAVA](#) are now prioritising action on brachycephalic health.

Action 9: *BWG members to promote, support and engage with research that aims to improve and increase the evidence base on brachycephalic dog health and welfare.*

Research

The research bodies within the BWG have continued to investigate areas of brachycephalics, including behaviour, genetics and conformational markers and reproduction.

The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) has now formed a [Brachycephalic Research Team](#) that has a vision to reduce the negative welfare impacts of brachycephalism on companion animals through world-leading research and education.

Additional BWG Activity

Communications sub-group

A communications sub-group of the BWG has been made up of the BVA, KC, PDSA, Dogs Trust, BSAVA, RSPCA and breed health representatives, and have developed a strategy for the group. The subgroup has developed plans to agree on a release policy for external stakeholder communications and a process for providing reactive comment for media requests in a timely manner. An improved website for BWG is

also under development to facilitate better awareness of the issues and collaborative work to tackle them. The new website will provide a central hub for any relevant research as well as providing a single point of reference to support future BWG comms activity.

Obesity Position Statement

Given the strong evidence that exists to support associations between obesity/overweight and welfare issues in brachycephalic breeds and the reality that obesity/overweight is a reversible and preventable condition, the BWG has prioritised obesity/overweight for specific focus during 2019. A position statement on obesity/overweight is currently being drafted which will be followed by a range of activities by BWG member groups to highlight the health benefits from maintaining a healthy body condition score in brachycephalic dogs.