

Focus on brachycephalic breeds



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From veterinarians, concerns are frequently raised regarding suffering and reduced functionality among the brachycephalic breeds. The fact that a shortened nose creates a predisposition from problems are by now well documented.

The Norwegian Kennel Club has for a significant time focused on the problems regarding respiratory issues and problems with temperature regulation for the brachycephalic breeds.

The Norwegian Kennel Club's work has so far consisted of the following:

- Spreading information and raising awareness among owners, breeders, breed clubs
- BSI (Breed Specific Instructions regarding exaggerations in pedigree dogs) – this includes both providing general information to judges as well as incorporating BSI as a part of the education of judges), to prevent exaggerated dogs being awarded
- Breed standards have, in general, been modernized in recent years. However, there are still descriptions in several standards that will make dogs predisposed for reduced functionality and health problems
- In 2015, the NKK sent a letter to the Norwegian Food Safety Authority, encouraging them to make registration of surgery to improve respiratory function for brachycephalic breeds mandatory. The Norwegian Kennel Club offered to manage the register of dogs having undergone this type of surgery. The Norwegian Kennel Club has no information of which dogs, or how many dogs, are currently being operated on?. The Norwegian Food Safety Authority declined the suggestion to register these operations.
- The Norwegian Kennel Club is currently part of a working group for dog welfare, with several other animal welfare groups in Norway. This group has worked extensively over the past six months on concrete suggestion to improve the health for these breeds

Source: http://web2.nkk.no/en/news/news/Focus+on+brachycephalic+breeds.b7C_wlHMWm.ips

- The Norwegian Kennel Club wants to establish an endurance test for the brachycephalic breeds – this work is well underway

Recently, the Norwegian Kennel Club board voted unanimously to intensify the work to improve the health for the brachycephalic breeds. The intensified efforts will begin this spring, and will include the following:

- The Norwegian Kennel Club will raise the issue during the Nordic Kennel Union meeting in April 2016
- The FCI will be contacted to ensure dialogue with the countries responsible for the breeds in questions. The Kennel Club may also be contacted directly regarding this matter, as they are responsible for several of the brachycephalic breeds. The dialogue with the various countries will include:
 - Outcross projects, with the intent of improving the anatomy of the exposed breeds, without reducing the genepool
 - Extensive revision of the breed standards with descriptions predisposing for health problems/reduced functionality
 - Revision of breed standards for breeds where even shorter noses are likely, or who are close to being at risk (nose/skull=1:2)
- The Norwegian Kennel Club will establish a voluntary register where owners can report that their dog has been operated for respiratory problems. This will be registered in DogWeb, the Norwegian Kennel Club health database, open to the public. Letters with information regarding surgery may also be sent to breed clubs and breeders
- Statements from the owner(s) of parents that these dogs have not undergone surgery for for respiratory issues will be registered when the litter is registered.
- Profile photos of all dogs being shown at dog shows will be taken and registered.

Dedicated breed club

The Norwegian Bulldog Club has already done solid work to improve the health for their breeds, and have, in their Breed Specific Strategy, begun work to develop an endurance test.

This test is a tool to measure whether the dog has problems breathing and/or regulating temperature during activity, so that the healthiest individuals may be selected for breeding. Endurance testing has also been attempted by other clubs, but the Norwegian Kennel Club now wants to improve this test by using treadmills and measuring heart rate to establish a more standardized test. The treadmill is ready, as is the customized heart rate measurers, and the testing of the equipment will begin already this week. Shortly, the Norwegian Kennel Club and the Norwegian Bulldog Club will be the actual testing of dogs.

The goal is that this test will provide an objective and scientific measurement of health, and therefore suitability for breeding. Hopefully, this will become one of several tools in the ongoing work to reduce the problems and suffering for brachycephalic breeds through selective breeding.

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The NKK is aware that the short-nosed breeds also have other significant health issues as a result of anatomy, particularly with eyes and teeth. We believe that the improvement in anatomy as a result of the measures now being taken will also help in these areas.

Key focus area Halat S. Askari

- There is no doubt that several short snout breeds have major challenges when it comes to health, and that the challenges in this area is not consistent with good dog welfare. This is an important health issue we are going to sharpen the focus on in the future. The development of certain breeds should not have gone so far. Nevertheless, this very unfortunate development has occurred, and measures must therefore now be reinforced. It goes without saying that NKK should lead the way in this effort, and we have great expectations that our work will give good results, says CEO Ms. Trine Hage.

