



**CHOOSE  
HEALTH**

SUPPORTED BY ROYAL CANIN

**Initiative**

**6th IDHW – 16th April 2026**

# Objective of the presentation

## PURPOSE

- Update about Royal Canin Choose Health initiative

## OUTPUT

- Spark your interest in learning more about the initiative during the WDS meeting



# A collaborative initiative led by 3 teams within ROYAL CANIN



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Global Pro Ecosystem Lead



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Global External Communication Lead



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Global ROYAL CANIN® Brand  
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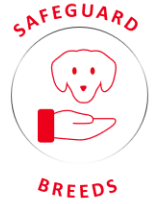


# CHOOSE HEALTH

Focusing on two major issues



- Structured around 3 pillars to drive change



↓  
Improve the health and welfare of breeds

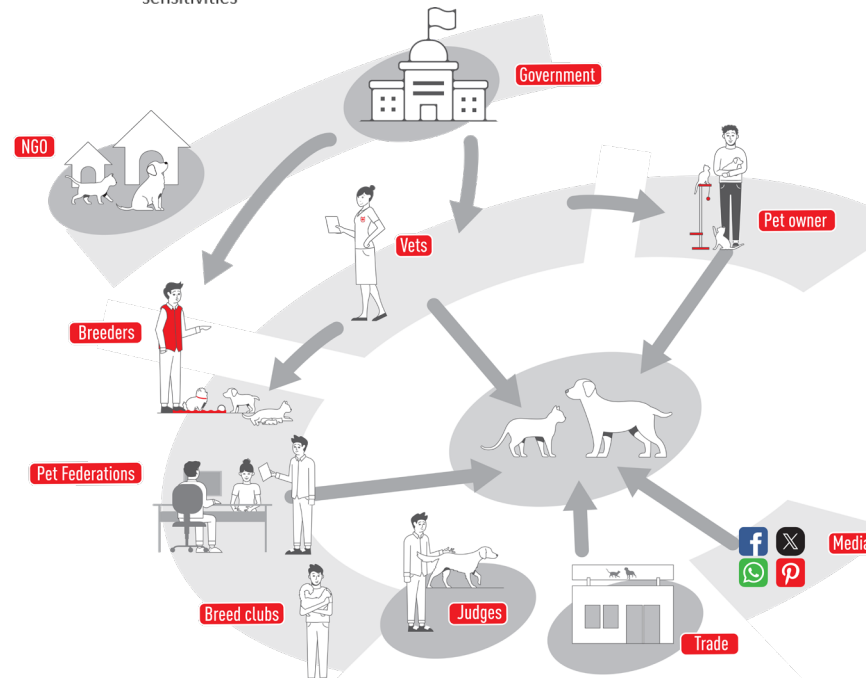


↓  
Make the breeding profession sustainable and recognized



↓  
Promote responsible acquisition and educate on specific health sensitivities

- Collaboration is key



FIGHT UNETHICAL  
PET PRODUCTION  
&  
EXTREME  
CONFORMATION  
(Brachy, Hypertypes)

BY PROMOTING  
RESPONSIBLE BREEDING  
&  
RESPONSIBLE PET  
OWNERSHIP

# Is this still relevant?

## PAST CRISIS



**PETA sues American Kennel Club, demanding end to 'deformed' breeding**

The civil claim says "breed standards for the bulldog, French bulldog, pug, dachshund and Chinese shar pei provide blueprints for the breeding of deformed, unhealthy dogs."



## MARCH 2026

- CRUFTS 2026



**Petition to strip Crufts 2026 'Best in Show' winner of title racks up 15,000 signatures in 24 hours**



## WE MUST MANAGE THE REPUTATIONAL RISK TO PROTECT PURE BREED DOGS

BREED BAN  
Breeding world attack



BREEDERS

PETS

PURE BREED AT RISK

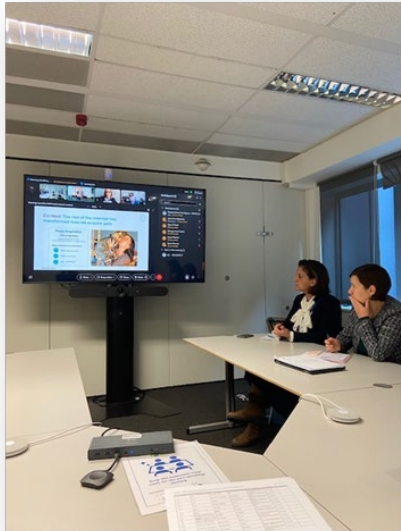


# 2025 Achievements at a glance



## Advocate to safeguard breeds

- Engaged with EU Commission



Oct 2025

## Professionalise Breeding

- Deployed DNA testing (EU) 9 live countries

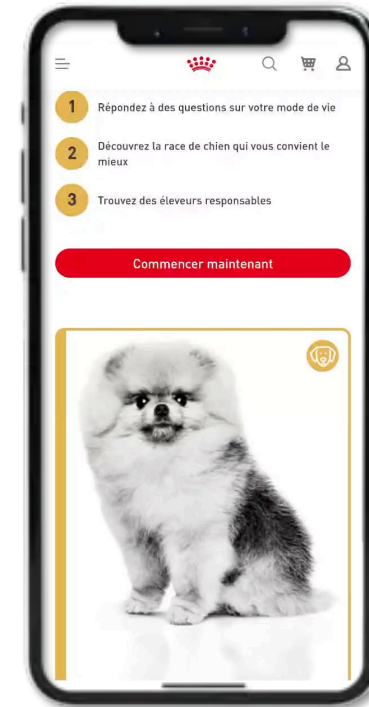


- PEF 2025: feb 2025



## Raise awareness on responsible acquisition and health breeds

- Educated pet owners through breed match tool



April 2026

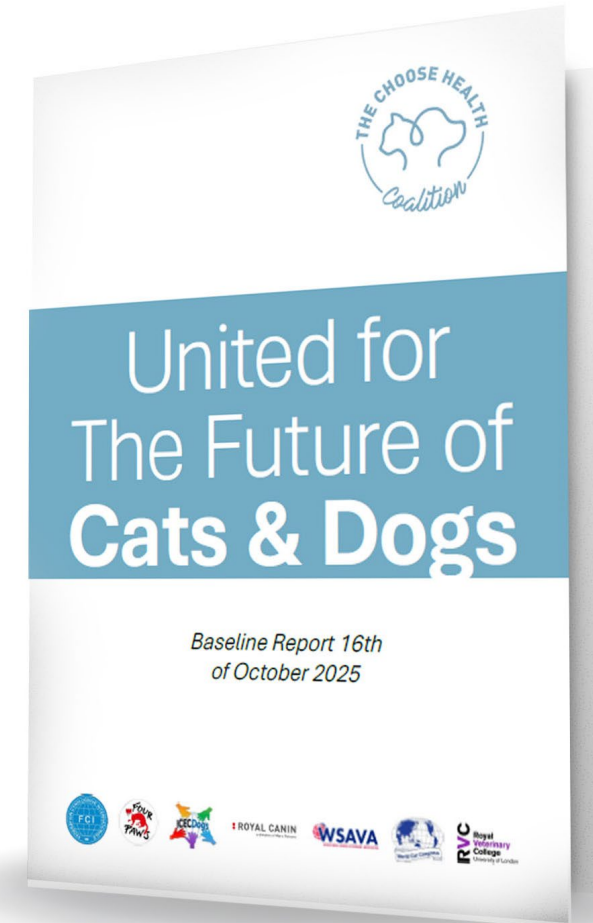


# The Coalition baseline report

STRONG  
PARTNERSHIPS



CHOOSE  
HEALTH



## What's in it?

- Key findings from existing publications on extreme conformation and low welfare pet production practices
- Our position and ambition as a coalition
- <https://www.royalcanin.com/uk/choosehealth>





# Baseline report content: Visual snapshot of the context

### Cats & Dogs Population

There are over 1.1 billion cats & dogs worldwide<sup>1</sup>.

299 million pets in Europe - 46% of European households have a pet - that's 90 million households.

### Cats & Dogs Trade

€ 1.3 - €4.6 billion<sup>2</sup>

Estimated value of the EU's dog & cat trade - the true value is difficult to predict due to widespread fraud and illegal activity.

Annual demand of dogs may exceed 8 million puppies a year in the EU.

### EU Pedigree Dog Populations

FCI Pedigree Dog Distribution in the EU - 2022

FCI Pedigree Dogs: 15.4%

Overall population: 84.6%

### Global Cat Populations<sup>5</sup>

Pet (domesticated) cats: ~373 million of which 0.064% are pedigree

Outdoor/feral cats: ~60 to 100 million

Stray cats: ~480 million

51% (Pedigree), 40% (Domesticated), 9% (Feral)

### Puppy Acquisition

36% of people spend less than 20 minutes researching where to get their puppies from<sup>10</sup>.

Where puppies were advertised<sup>11</sup>:

- 33% Website Ad Sites
- 39% Social Media
- 8% Newspapers

Want-it now culture, social media and the ease of online impulse purchases mean people do not conduct adequate research and acquire without knowing where they get it from.

### Pets in social media

There are currently over 2 million pet influencer accounts on Instagram, with a combined reach of over 40 billion followers<sup>14</sup>.

On TikTok, 1.2 million Pet-related videos were created in 2024.

### Low Welfare Pet Production Practices

Low welfare pet production practices refer to breeding, raising, or selling pets under environmental conditions and/or with physical conformation that fail to meet minimum established legal, ethical, scientific, moral and social standards for animal health and welfare. These practices often prioritize profit or human preferences over the physical and psychological needs of the pets, resulting in compromised health and welfare.

A survey conducted by FOUR PAWS revealed that insufficient research prior to purchasing a puppy significantly increases the risk of owners purchasing from low welfare pet producers and falling victim to scams<sup>18</sup>.

- 12% of people pay for their puppy before they have even seen it
- 20% don't see the puppy in its breeding environment
- 31% either don't see the puppy with its mum, or see it with a dog that they suspect was not the real mum
- 28% who bought from the internet, after initially seeing the advert online, claim they experienced financial hardship
- 25% of pups found on social media go on to die before their fifth birthday<sup>19</sup>

Almost 50% of puppies acquired online are brought home too young<sup>18</sup>

### Extreme Conformation

Extreme conformations describe physical traits that don't exist in nature but are heavily shaped by human preferences and that cause significant health and welfare issues for cats and dogs. ICEDocs defines these traits as 'a physical appearance that has been so significantly altered by humankind away from the ancestral natural appearance that affected pets commonly suffer poor health and welfare, with negative impacts on their quality and quantity of life.'

### Examples of Extreme Conformations & Affected Breeds

<b>Brachycephaly</b> <b>Description:</b> Shortened skull leading to breathing difficulties and risk of brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome or BOAS <b>Examples of Breeds Affected:</b> Pug <sup>17</sup> , French Bulldog <sup>18</sup> , English Bulldog <sup>19</sup> , Boston Terrier, Boxer <sup>20</sup>	<b>Excessive Skin Folds</b> <b>Description:</b> Deep skin folds can cause infections, dermatitis and eye issues due to trapped moisture and debris <b>Examples of Breeds Affected:</b> Shar Pei <sup>21</sup> , English Bulldog <sup>22</sup> , Neapolitan Mastiff <sup>23</sup>
<b>Protruding or Bulging Eyes</b> <b>Description:</b> Prominent eyes are prone to injury, ulcers, and dryness due to inadequate eyelid coverage <b>Examples of Breeds Affected:</b> Pug <sup>24</sup> , Shih Tzu <sup>25</sup> , Pekingese, Boston Terrier <sup>26</sup>	<b>Sloped Back</b> <b>Description:</b> Exaggerated angulation can lead to hip dysplasia, arthritis and spinal problems <b>Examples of Breeds Affected:</b> German Shepherd dog <sup>27</sup>
<b>Extreme Dwarfism or Gigantism</b> <b>Description:</b> Excessive size variation can result in joint problems, heart issues and shortened lifespan <b>Examples of Breeds Affected:</b> St Bernard, Great Dane <sup>28</sup>	<b>Turned in or Out Eyelids</b> <b>Description:</b> Dogs are deliberately bred for abnormal eyelid conformation, leading to the turning in or out of eyelids <b>Examples of Breed Affected:</b> Shar Pei <sup>29</sup> , Chow Chow, Neapolitan Mastiff <sup>30</sup>

### An Endemic Issue...

- United Kingdom: Cat abandonment up 30%<sup>31</sup>
- Germany: 82% of shelters report increase in animals<sup>32</sup>
- France: 100k+ companion animals abandoned<sup>33</sup>
- Spain: 340k+ companion animals abandoned<sup>34</sup>
- Italy: 85k companion animals abandoned<sup>35</sup>
- Romania: 500k+ stray dogs and likely even more cats<sup>36</sup>

An estimated 362 million homeless cats and dogs worldwide<sup>37</sup>

2024 surveys from ASPCA<sup>38</sup> and SAC<sup>39</sup> highlights that the main reasons for surrendering a pet are:

- Housing issues
- Financial hardship
- Behavioural problems
- Lack of time or Lifestyle changes
- Health Issues

### ... Fuelled By A Vicious Cycle

Trends favouring certain breeds are contributing to the rise of pet ownership. Online sale platforms encourage impulse purchases and make it easier for low-welfare pet producers to operate undetected. These breeders often prioritise profit over animal health, driving the proliferation of extreme conformations and reinforcing harmful trends that compromise the wellbeing of pets.





# Baseline report content: The coalition commitments and positions

## Our Response as the Choose Health Coalition

This is why Royal Canin formed the Choose Health Coalition in November 2024, bringing together a select group of organizations: Federation Cynologique Internationale (FCI), FOUR PAWS, ICECDogs (International Collaborative on Extreme Conformations in Dogs), Royal Veterinary College (RVC), World Cat Congress (WCC), and World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA).

Each of these partners is already engaged in initiatives aimed at promoting more welfare-friendly pet production practices and at reducing extreme conformation. Through the coalition, we will leverage the collective knowledge, experiences, and ongoing activities of our members to create a cohesive program that will drive meaningful change for pet health and welfare and the wider pet ecosystem.

As a group, we will raise awareness of low welfare pet production practices and extreme conformation and use our shared networks and expertise to drive change among key audiences.



## Our Ambition

Act together to raise awareness and ultimately achieve:

- A notable increase in high welfare pet production practices, within the following scope:
  - Dogs and cats only
  - Aspects related to acquisition and production
  - On a global scale.
- A notable global decrease (90% reduction within five years) in the proportion of dogs and cats with extreme conformations.

## Our Commitments

1

Work together to promote the breeding and acquisition of dogs and cats with good innate health.

2

Amplify the global conversation on responsible behaviours around pet ownership & acquisition and around breeding.

3

Speak as one voice against extreme conformations and low welfare pet production practices.

4

Prioritise the health and welfare of cats and dogs in all our activities as separate organisations and together as a coalition and be challenged if we do not achieve this.

5

Raise awareness of, and inspire positive actions aimed at eliminating extreme conformation and low welfare pet production practices and to promote responsible acquisition.

## Our picture of success



Protecting cats' and dogs' health and welfare is a primary concern shared by all coalition members.



Tangible improvements in the overall health, welfare and quality of life of cats and dogs.



New bans on cat or dog breeds not needed unless the breed is inherently and irreversibly defined by a phenotype or genotype that are incompatible with good health and welfare at a population level.



No new cat or dog breed have been created where the defining characteristics are based on phenotypic or genotypic abnormalities or other inherited traits, which give rise to health problems or impede the normal life of the dog or cat.



A culture of mutual understanding and collaboration that respects the diverse perspectives of coalition members and strengthens our collective impact for cats and dogs worldwide.



Unified, consistent messaging from coalition members that prioritizes cat and dog health and welfare.



Widespread public acceptance that extreme conformation in dogs and cats is no longer acceptable from a welfare, moral, legal or social perspective. A clear shift in perceptions of what makes a desirable dog or cat with greater emphasis on health, function and welfare.



Acknowledgement from owners, breeders and other primary audiences that meaningful change is necessary to improve the health and welfare of dogs and cats.



## Our positions

- We believe that **cat and dog health and welfare should always come first**. These should be the primary criteria when judging or rewarding animals in shows and when making decisions about breeding, acquiring or owning any cat or dog.
- We recognize that both low-welfare breeding practices in pet production and extreme conformation are **complex, systemic issues**. Addressing them requires a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach in bringing together breeders, geneticists, media, owners, veterinarians, kennel clubs, cat fanciers' associations, animal welfare organisations, the academic and research communities, commercial partners, and policymakers.
- We believe that **physical diversity across dogs and cat breeds can be promoted within the limits of good animal health and welfare standards**. We support balanced, evidence-based regulations that promotes both physical and genetic diversity and high standards of health and welfare within breeds.
- We only support bans on cat or dog breeds when the breed is unavoidably defined by phenotypic or genotypic traits incompatible with good health and welfare in the general breed population.
- We do not support the creation of new cat or dog breeds defined by characteristics based on phenotypic or genotypic abnormalities or other inherited traits that cause health problems or prevent cats and dogs from living a normal, healthy life.
- We endorse the ICECDogs definition of 'innate healthy' as a solid foundation for identifying instances of extreme conformation.





# Baseline report content

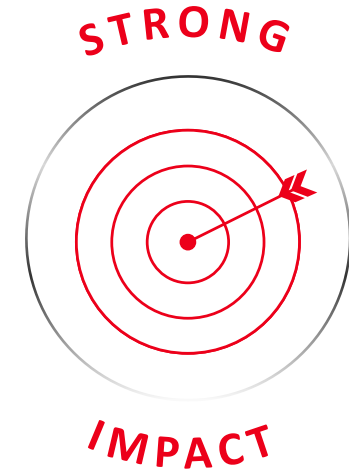
## The coalition call to action

### CHOOSE HEALTH: JOIN THE MOVEMENT FOR A BETTER FUTURE FOR CATS AND DOGS

The Choose Health Coalition calls on all stakeholders in cat and dog health and welfare — including breeders, breed institutions, authorities, owners, veterinarians, influencers, marketers and the general public — to recognize and embrace the vital responsibility each holds in improving the health and welfare of cats and dogs. This means breeding, acquiring responsibly cats and dog and not promoting, breeding, selling, or purposely adopting pets with extreme conformations that compromise their welfare. We all share responsibility for the welfare of cats and dogs. Whether we are breeding, owning, caring for pets, or even only engaging with pet-related content, we have the power to make choices that **prioritize health and contribute to a better future for cats and dogs.**



Establish and cement the partnerships needed to have the **credibility** and capability to take action



Ignite the conversation, generate **support for change** in order to engage & educate pet lovers



# Launched during an official panel

## 4 panelists:

- 3 member of the Choose Health coalition
- 1 member from the European Commission

## Audience :

- Mars petcare
- Press
- European Parliament
- Breeders
- Veterinarian
- Health and welfare committee

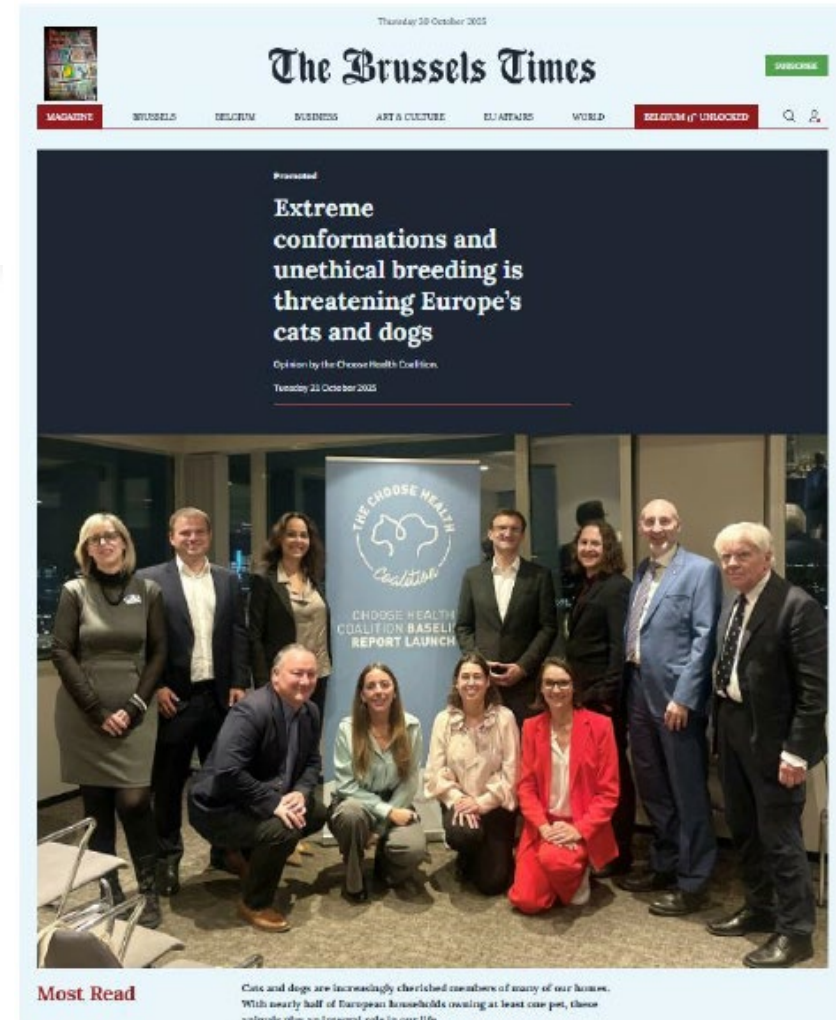


# Very good Media coverage

7 Articles

Germany, NL, Belgium

546 000 + Readerships



**STRONG PARTNERSHIPS**



Archiefbeeld. © Thijs Patijn

## Alarmerende stijging van broedfok honden en katten door aankoop via Tiktok: "Dierenasielen overspoeld"

wver

16 oktober 2025 om 20:23





A Better   
World For Pets

**Let's discover  
more about  
Choose Health at  
the WDS in June**