



Launching a multistakeholder human behaviour change program
to address extreme conformation in companion animals

Ashleigh Brown, Scientific and Policy Manager
17th April 2026

Registered charity in England and Wales. Charity no. 219099.

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)



Multi-species remit

- Companion animals
- Wildlife
- Farmed animals
- Animals in science



Advocacy & prevention

- Education
- Science & research
- Campaigns
- Advocacy



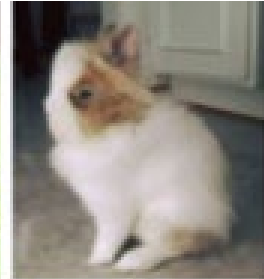
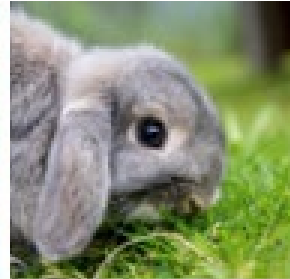
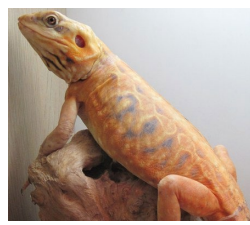
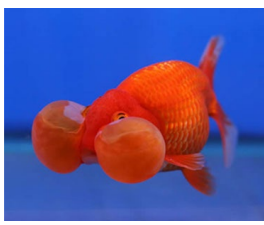
Rescue & care

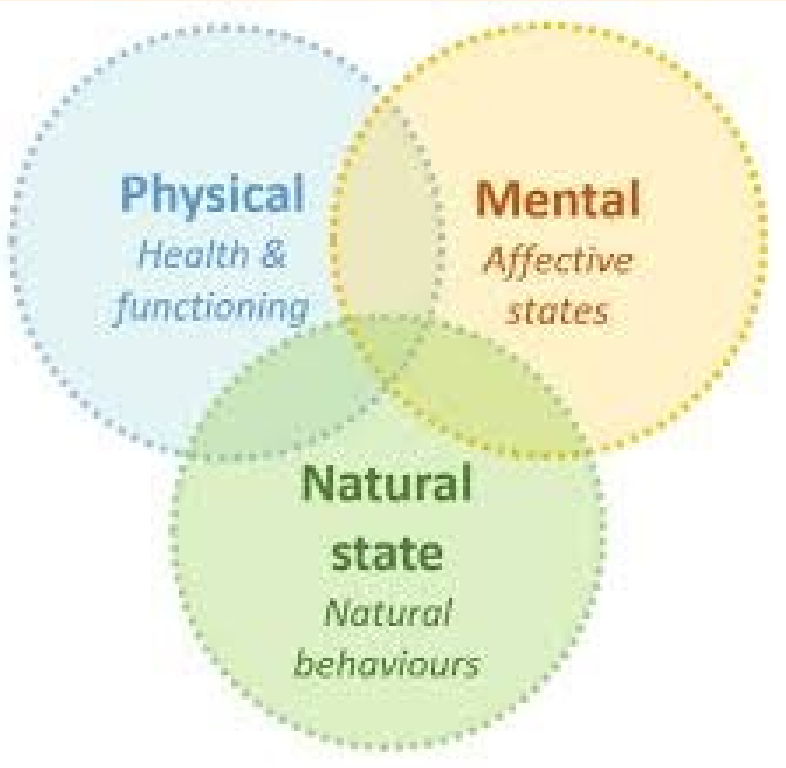
- Rescue
- Treatment
- Rehabilitation
- Rehoming



Enforcement

- Cruelty & neglect
- Investigations
- Prosecutions





Physical:

- Respiratory, mobility, visual, dental problems
- Mating and birthing difficulties
- Musculo-skeletal, skin disease

Mental:

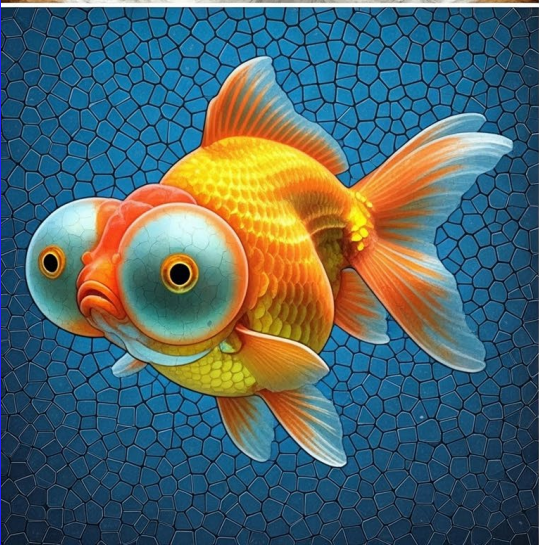
- Discomfort, pain
- Fear, distress
- Frustration, thwarted motivation

Natural:

- Behavioural inhibition e.g. locomotion, play, ingestion
- Exercise intolerance
- Sleep deprivation
- Disrupted conspecific communication

Impact on charities & professionals





AMBITION

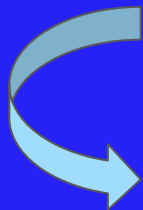
End harmful selling and breeding of pets in England and Wales.



IMPACT

Extreme conformation programme vision

“All companion animals should be bred with innate conformation and physical characteristics that facilitate good health and positive welfare.”



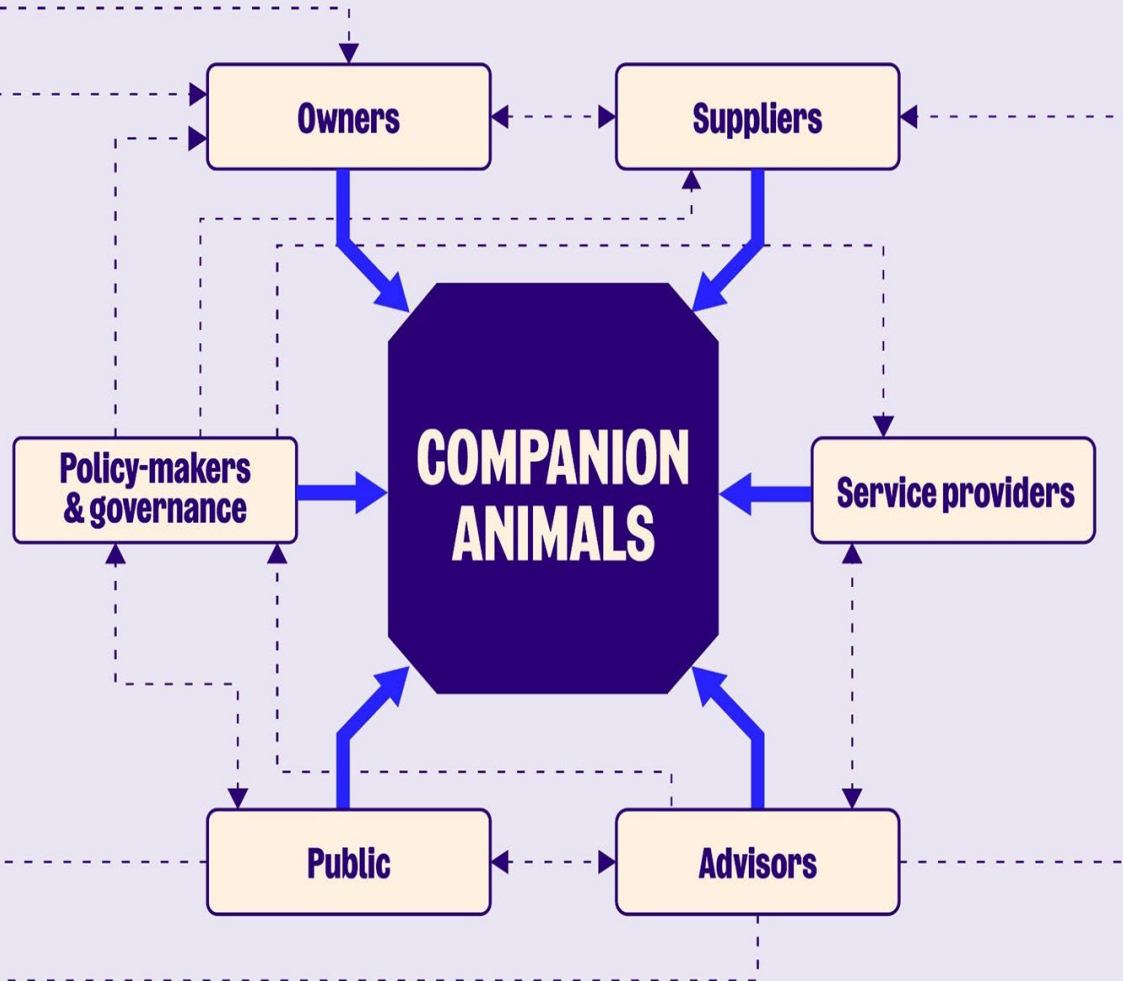
Programme outcome:
Reduced prevalence and severity of companion animal suffering due to extreme conformation



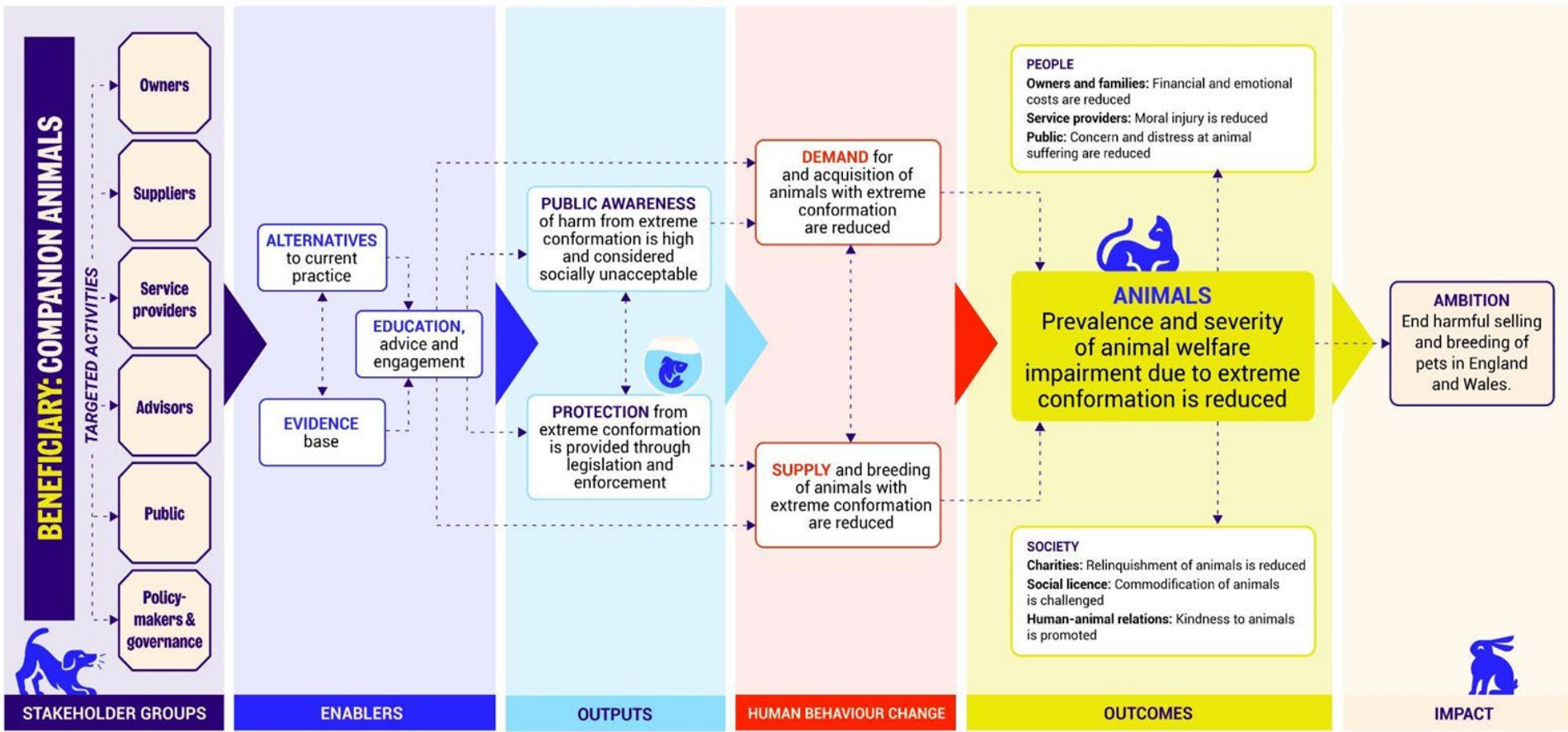
The suffering must stop

Six inter-connected stakeholder groups

- Different levels and direction of influence
- Strategic goal for each
- Collectively drive change



Theory of Change



Our 2026 priorities

1. Educational outreach
2. Strategy report & stakeholder engagement
3. Public-facing campaign
4. Media production & awareness-raising
5. Canine & feline innate health assessment
6. Exploration of legislative levers

Shifting societal attitudes to prioritise health and welfare over aesthetics



We need you!

Owners: Demand for and acquisition of pets with extreme conformation is reduced.

Suppliers: Supply and breeding of pets with extreme conformation is reduced.

Service providers: Advocacy for prioritisation of welfare over aesthetics is enacted through dissemination of consistent advice to clients.



We need you!

Advisors: Education of welfare-focussed, evidence-based messaging about the impact of extreme conformation is widely championed.

Public: Awareness that extreme conformation impairs animal welfare is high amongst the general public and considered socially unacceptable.

Policy-makers & governance: Protection for pets from extreme conformation is provided through effective legislation and enforcement.



The suffering must stop

Thank you

