

The background of the page is a solid green color. In the center, there are two overlapping silhouettes: a larger one of a dog (possibly a Weimaraner) and a smaller one of a cat, both facing right. The silhouettes are a darker shade of green than the background. The bottom right corner of the page features a subtle grid pattern.

# **Extreme breeding in Europe - Mapping of legislation**

November 2023

# Extreme breeding in Europe - Mapping of legislation

## Table of content

### Summary

### Introduction

### Extreme breeding legislation survey findings

- > Current legislation on extreme breeding
- > Lack of enforcement

### Recommendations on extreme breeding legislation

### Conclusions

### Annexes

- > Annex 1: Major traits associated with extreme breeding
- > Annex 2: Extreme breeding legislation links by country
- > Annex 3: Method
- > Annex 4: Questionnaire

With support of FECAVA/FVE



# Extreme breeding in Europe - Mapping of legislation

## Summary

Extreme breeding has become a major animal welfare concern, especially in the last decade with the surge in popularity of extremely brachycephalic (flat-faced) dogs and other companion animals showing extreme features. Countries across Europe have tried with varied success, different initiatives from education, media campaigns, to regulation, legislation and multi-stakeholder working groups to name a few, to tackle the issue.

This report aims at mapping the existing legislation on extreme breeding and extreme features in the EU and other European countries. Aware of the already applied measures across the EU Member States, and having the EU consumer and the EU Single Market in mind, the report is calling for EU-wide legislative initiative as a prominent instrument to effect change.

## Introduction

The current science of animal welfare has evolved from the concept of the Five Freedoms<sup>1</sup>, a globally-recognised animal welfare model established in 1979 by the Farm Animal Welfare Council<sup>2</sup> and currently the legal basis for animal welfare in the EU.

Over the years this model has been adapted with some countries now applying the five welfare needs<sup>3</sup> and some the Five Domains model<sup>4</sup>. Within the EU, a shift has taken place in recent years towards the more positive Five Domains principle in which animal welfare is understood as the physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which the animal lives and dies<sup>5</sup>, consisting of nutrition, physical environment, health, behavioural interactions and mental state.

Extreme breeding impacts the physical and mental health of the animals affected (Annex 1). According to the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) and the Federation of

<sup>1</sup> Freedom from hunger and thirst; from fear and distress; from heat stress or physical discomfort; from pain, injury and disease; and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour

<sup>2</sup> Farm Animal Welfare Council. Five Freedoms [Internet]. 2009 [cited 2023 June 06]. Available from <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20121010012427/http://www.fawc.org.uk/freedoms.htm>

<sup>3</sup> United Kingdom. Department for Environment, Food and rural affairs. Animal Welfare Act 2006. [Internet] London; [cited 2023 June 06]. Available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/45/section/9>

<sup>4</sup> Mellor DJ, Beausoleil NJ, Littlewood KE, McLean AN, McGreevy PD, Jones B, Wilkins C. The 2020 Five Domains Model: Including Human–Animal Interactions in Assessments of Animal Welfare. *Animals*. 2020 September 28; 10(10):1870. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani10101870>

<sup>5</sup> European Commission. Commission staff working document. Fitness check of the EU animal welfare legislation (SWD (2022) 329 final) [Internet]. 2022 [cited 2023 June 12]. Available from: [https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/aw\\_eval\\_revision\\_sw\\_d\\_2022-328\\_en.pdf](https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/aw_eval_revision_sw_d_2022-328_en.pdf)

European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA), extreme conformation of pets<sup>6,7</sup> occurs when selecting for a particular 'look' (e.g. flat nose, sloping back, bulging or droopy eyes, skin folds, round skull) to the point of causing animal suffering.

Extreme breeding compromises most, if not all of the five domains, clear examples are the Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS)<sup>8</sup> and its many unintended consequences and the short limbs selection for cartilage defects leading to joint disease and a predisposition to spinal problems<sup>9,10</sup> ([Annex 1](#)).

Despite the size and monetary value of the market, the exact data on breeding, sale and trade are not being collected on a systematic basis across Europe. A recently published research paper<sup>11</sup> using anonymised veterinary clinical data from the VetCompass Programme<sup>12</sup> (2.000.000+ dogs under first opinion care in the United Kingdom in 2019) revealed that over 20% are breeds with extreme conformation.

While data for breed populations is lacking at EU level, yet it may not be far from reality extrapolating those numbers to conclude that over 18 million dogs, 22 million cats and potentially 4 million small mammals in Europe have some degree of exaggerated features likely to have a negative impact on their health and welfare therefore in their quality of life.

As well as impacting animal welfare, extreme breeding also causes emotional distress to owners<sup>13</sup>, veterinarians and animal welfare sector workers. It places financial strain on owners<sup>14</sup> and insurance companies and it has, in recent years, become a thriving source

<sup>6</sup> Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations. Breeding for extreme conformations. What's the problem?. [Internet]. 2018 [cited 2023 June 12]. Available from: [https://www.fecava.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FLYER\\_Extreme-breeding\\_RVau21\\_06\\_18\\_BAT.pdf](https://www.fecava.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FLYER_Extreme-breeding_RVau21_06_18_BAT.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Federation of Veterinarians of Europe and Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations. FECAVA, FVE Position Paper on breeding healthy dogs: the effect of selective breeding on the health and welfare of dogs. Health and welfare should go before looks, vet urge [Internet]. 2018 [cited 2023 June 12]. Available from: [https://www.fecava.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2018\\_06\\_Extreme\\_breeding\\_adopted.pdf](https://www.fecava.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2018_06_Extreme_breeding_adopted.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Mitze S, Barrs VR, Beatty JA, Hobi S, Bęczkowski PM. Brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome: much more than a surgical problem. *Vet Q*. 2022 November 15; 42(1):213-223. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01652176.2022.2145621>

<sup>9</sup> Rusbridge C. Canine chondrodystrophic intervertebral disc disease (Hansen type I disc disease). *BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders*. 2015 December 01; 16(S1). Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2474-16-S1-S11>

<sup>10</sup> International Cat Care. Munchkin [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2023 June 7]. Available from: <https://icatcare.org/advice/munchkin/>

<sup>11</sup> O'Neill DG, McMillan KM, Church DB, Brodbelt DC. Dog breeds and conformations in the UK in 2019: VetCompass canine demography and some consequent welfare implications. *PLoS ONE* 2023 July 26; 18(7): e0288081. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0288081>

<sup>12</sup> VetCompass. VetCompass Programme London: RVC Electronic Media Unit; 2023. Available from: <http://www.rvc.ac.uk/VetCOMPASS/>

<sup>13</sup> Croney CC. Turning up the Volume on Man's Best Friend: Ethical Issues Associated with Commercial Dog Breeding. *Journal of Applied Animal Ethics Research*. 2019 August 22; 1(2): 230-25. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1163/25889567-12340011>

<sup>14</sup> Packer RMA, O'Neill DG, Fletcher F, Farnworth MJ. Come for the looks, stay for the personality? A mixed methods investigation of reacquisition and owner recommendation of Bulldogs, French Bulldogs and Pugs. *PLoS One*. 2020 August 26; 15(8): e0237276. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0237276>

<sup>15</sup> Scottish Government. Agriculture and Rural economy directorate. Sourcing of pet dogs from illegal importation and puppy farms 2016-2017: scoping research. [Internet] 2017 [cited 2023 June 07]. Available from <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scoping-research-sourcing-pet-dogs-illegal-importation-puppy-farms-2016/pages/16/>

## Extreme breeding legislation survey findings

In May 2023, a survey (**Annex 3 & 4**) to map the legislation currently applied and in the process of being drafted across the European countries took place. The survey also looked at wider issues such as enforcement.

### Current legislation on extreme breeding

There are several different ways that countries across Europe have decided to, or are planning to legislate so as to tackle the issue of extreme breeding and extreme features:

1. Banning the breeding of animals with certain features such as: short muzzles, hairlessness or large skin folds (e.g. Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Sweden and Switzerland);
2. Banning the breeding of certain breeds of animals with regards to conformation (e.g. Belgium and Switzerland);
3. Protecting future offspring. i.e. banning the breeding of animals that will produce offspring that are likely to suffer because of the genetic or phenotypic makeup of the parent animals (e.g. Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom);
4. Banning importation, sales, and marketing of certain breeds/extreme features (e.g. Belgium and Austria);
5. Banning the showing of certain breeds (e.g. Germany, Austria and Switzerland);
6. Banning the ownership of certain features (e.g. Belgium and Austria).

<sup>15</sup> Scottish Government. Agriculture and Rural economy directorate. Sourcing of pet dogs from illegal importation and puppy farms 2016-2017: scoping research. [Internet] 2017 [cited 2023 June 07]. Available from <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scoping-research-sourcing-pet-dogs-illegal-importation-puppy-farms-2016/pages/16/>

<sup>16</sup> Official Journal of the European Union. The illegal trade in companion animals in the EU. [Internet] [ 2021 [cited 2023 June 07]. Available from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020IP0035>

<sup>17</sup> BBC News. Tax-Dodging Puppy Farmers Targeted in HMRC Operation. [Internet]. 2019 [cited 2023 June 7]. Available from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-48167134>

<sup>18</sup> In the Brussels region, a similar ministerial Decree mentioned in Annex 2 of (13/04/2021) for the Flanders region, is yet to be drafted, building on the advice of the Brussels Council for Animal Welfare (as of September 2023).

<sup>19</sup> Already the case for the Flanders region, soon to be banned in the Brussels region (as of September 2023).

<sup>20</sup> This is already stated in the Flanders region, with a similar policy recommended by the Brussels Council for Animal Welfare in the Brussels region, although not yet adopted. (as of September 2023).

<sup>21</sup> For the Flanders region, not yet adopted for the Brussels region (as of September 2023).

<sup>22</sup> For the Flanders region, not yet adopted for the Brussels region (as of September 2023).

According to the survey ([Annex 3 & 4](#)), respondents from 19 out of 22 countries see extreme breeding as a welfare concern, with 9 of the countries considering it a cause of great concern. 11 of those countries have already put legislation in place to tackle extreme breeding and/or extreme features ([Annex 2](#)). However, there is wide variation in the scope, application and interpretation of such legislation.

**Maps and Table 1 below provide a compilation of the answers to the survey on the following topics:**

**Map 1:** Is there existing legislation on extreme breeding?

Whether there is legislation already in place for any aspect of extreme breeding/features ([Column 2](#)).



**Map 2:** Does any such legislation protect future offspring?

Whether legislation aimed at protecting future offspring exists ([Column 3](#)). Historically, legislation has covered the existing animals' health and welfare. Prohibiting breeding from animals that are likely to produce diseased offspring may prevent future suffering rather than waiting for it to happen.



**Map 3:** Are there bans on certain extreme features?

**Map 4:** Are there bans on certain breeds?

Whether extreme features or specific breeds are being banned (**Columns 4 & 5**). In some countries banning breeds has proven problematic having opted for a ban on extreme features instead which may cover an ample number of breeds.



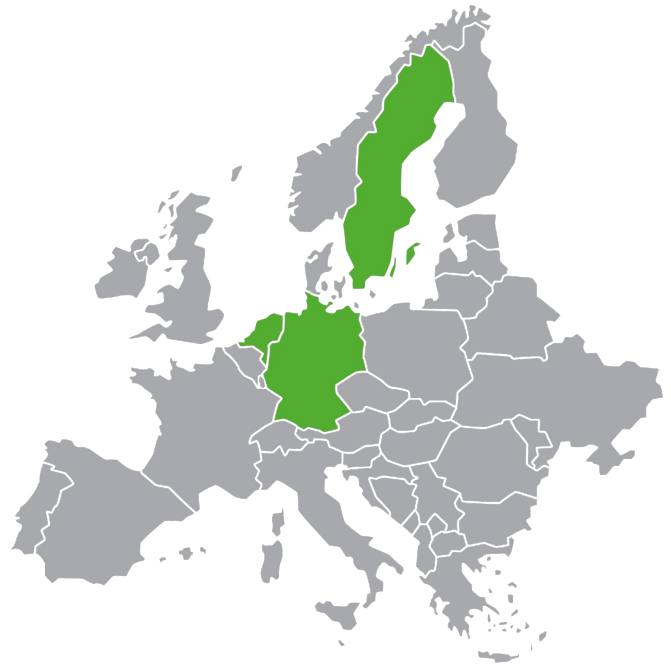
**Map 5:** Are there ownership bans?

Whether a ban on ownership exists (**Column 6**). Such a ban may avoid the pitfalls of lack of traceability of an animal back to his original breeder.



**Map 6:** Are there laws on certain conformation- altering surgeries or assisted fertility?

Whether legislation on conformation-altering surgeries or assisted fertility exists (**Column 7**). Some breeds are prone to significant health and reproductive issues for which surgery and assisted reproduction techniques are the default approach (**Annex 1**). It has to be noted that this survey does not include surgical mutilations for appearance such as: ear cropping and tail docking.



**Map 7:** Do you feel existing laws are effective/enforced?

The extent to which the respondents feel that existing legislation is being effectively enforced. (**Column 8**)





**Table 1: Extreme breeding legislation at a glance**

Country	Column 2 Is there existing legislation on extreme breeding?	Column 3 Does any such legislation protect future offspring?	Column 4 Are there bans on certain extreme features?	Column 5 Are there bans on certain breeds?	Column 6 Are there ownership bans?	Column 7 Are there laws on certain conformation-altering surgeries or assisted fertility?	Column 8 Do you feel existing laws are effective/enforced?
Belgium (BE)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Bulgaria (BG)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Denmark (DK)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Germany (DE)	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X
Ireland (IE)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Greece (EL)	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
Spain (ES)	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X
France (FR)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Croatia (HR)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Italy (IT)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lithuania (LT)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Luxembourg (LU)	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
Netherlands (NL)	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X
Austria (AT)	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X
Portugal (PT)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Romania (RO)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Slovenia (SI)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Finland (FI)	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X
Sweden (SE)	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X
Norway (NO)	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X
Switzerland (CH)	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
United Kingdom (UK)	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X

### Belgium (BE)

Breeding of animals with inherited disease that cannot be remedied through judicious mating is prohibited in Flanders. The focus lies on choosing animals with no physical or behavioural characteristics that are, or could be harmful either to the parents or offspring. A similar rule has not yet been adopted in Brussels' legislation.

The breeding and ownership of Scottish fold cats is prohibited in Flanders, with a similar ban not yet been adopted in the Brussels region. However, trade continues and enforce-

ment is problematic. No legislation exists regarding assisted fertility or surgical alterations due to extreme breeding.

## **Bulgaria (BG)**

There is currently no legislation with regard to extreme breeding, including no bans on ownership, trade, features or breeds. The decisions regarding suitable breeding animals are left at the discretion of the cynological and felinological associations (i.e. the registration and showing bodies).

Decisions regarding assisted fertility and surgical alterations are left to veterinary discretion.

## **Denmark (DK)**

There is a growing awareness that the breeding of certain breeds has a negative impact on both the health and the welfare of such animals. However, increased public awareness has not led to the problem being resolved.

Furthermore, the authority given by the Animal Welfare Act (consolidated Act from 2021) to introduce such regulations has not been utilised until now.

## **Germany (DE)**

Legislation exists prohibiting the breeding of animals that may produce offspring that are likely to suffer, either physically or behaviourally/mentally. It is also illegal to breed from animals that have features that could result in pain or suffering in either parents or offspring. Artificial insemination is not allowed to be used to produce animals with extreme features likely to cause suffering. It is also prohibited to show and exhibit animals with extreme features.

Current legislation remains difficult to enforce and only applies to individual animals, not breeds. With this in mind there is a proposal in place to introduce supplemental extreme breeding legislation expected to be more effective.

## **Ireland (IE)**

Extreme breeding is of great concern to the veterinary profession but not to the public. While there is no legislation in place with regard to extreme breeding, including features, breeds and ownership, there is, however, work underway to address the issue of brachycephalic animals with a focus on fitness to breed certification. Surgical insemination is against the law but such a ban is not adequately enforced.

## **Greece (EL)**

The breeding of companion animals whose anatomical and physiological characteristics or behavioural characteristics may, depending on the species and breed, prove harmful to the health and well-being of the female and of her offspring is banned. The Ministerial decision that would specify such features is pending (as of July 2023).

## **Spain (ES)**

Until this year there was no legislation regarding the breeding or ownership of animals with extreme features. The new law 7/2023 on the Protection and Welfare of animals will come into force in September 2023. Article 27 of this new legislation prohibits breeding from animals that could lead to serious health problems.

## **France (FR)**

There is no current or proposed legislation on the matter.

## **Croatia (HR)**

There is no current or proposed legislation on the matter. Their efforts focus mainly on education of both potential dog owners and breeders.

## **Italy (IT)**

There is no current or proposed legislation on the matter.

## **Lithuania (LT)**

There is no current or proposed legislation on the matter. However, the cynological organisation (kennel club) has strict rules about brachycephalic breeding for registered animals, such as requiring an exercise tolerance test.

## **Luxembourg (LU)**

While there are no ownership or breed bans and no legislation regarding assisted fertility or surgery to alter conformation, there is legislation on extreme breeding.

Current legislation prohibits the breeding of animals with features that are likely to produce unhealthy offspring or might impact on the well-being of the offspring. Such legislation however is not currently enforced nor effective.

## **Netherlands (NL)**

It is prohibited to breed from extremely brachycephalic dogs and this has been quantified, based on six criteria. From the breed perspective, it is illegal to breed Scottish fold cats and Bambino sphynx cats. However, there are no ownership bans on these animals so trade and importation remain an issue from an enforcement point of view. Penalties do not seem to be enough to deter some breeders. The Netherlands also ban elective caesarean sections and it is compulsory to try to ensure where possible that breeding is natural.

A keepers' ban and a marketing/social media ban for companion animals with extreme features has been proposed which may come into force in the next 2-5 years. The keepers' ban will prohibit the ownership of animals with features that cause suffering in all individuals with that feature, such as the folded ears of Scottish Fold cats that are a consequence of osteochondrodysplasia. The marketing and social media ban aims to prohibit showing images or videos of animals with extreme features.

## **Austria (AT)**

There is legislation in place. While specific breeds are not banned, extreme features, particularly those associated with brachycephaly are. Features and symptoms that are mentioned are: shortness of breath, abnormal movements, lameness, inflammation of the skin, hairlessness, inflammation of the conjunctiva and/or cornea, blindness, exophthalmos, deafness, neurological symptoms, malformations of the teeth, malformations of the skullcap. Body shapes that are likely to affect natural reproduction are also banned.

The legislation concerning extreme breeding also extends to importation, acquisition, ownership (including transfer of ownership), exhibition and advertising. However, there is an exception if the breeder can prove they are part of a breed improvement program that is aiming for healthier generations to come. There is also an exception for animal adoption centres.

## **Portugal (PT)**

The breeding of brachycephalic animals is on the rise. There is no current legislation concerning a ban on ownership, extreme breeds nor extreme features.

## **Romania (RO)**

There is no current or proposed legislation on the matter. General levels of animal welfare and understanding are poor, contributing to the large stray animal population and high levels of neglect among owned animals.

## **Slovenia (SI)**

There is a steady rise in the popularity of brachycephalic breeds. Although there is legislation that prohibits the breeding of vertebrates with hereditary defects and protects offspring, there is currently no special mention to extreme breeding although drafting legislation is underway planned to enter into force by 2025.

## **Finland (FI)**

Current legislation states that animal protection considerations and health of animals must be taken into account in animal breeding. Animal breeding or use of breeding methods which may cause distress or significant damage to the health or welfare of the animal is prohibited.

Finland is in the process of redrafting its animal welfare legislation which will come into effect by January 2024. According to the new Act, animal breeding must aim to produce viable, functional and healthy animals. An animal may not be used for breeding if the mating is likely to cause significant harm to the offsprings' wellbeing or the animal is unable to reproduce naturally due to an inherited characteristic or illness.

Where assisted fertility is concerned, it also states that breeding methods that may cause significant harm to the welfare of the animal shall not be used. A new decree will be drafted with detailed provisions on extreme breeding. There will also be and also carry an obligation for veterinarians to report a number of breed conformational defects to the registry body. Enforcement will also be addressed, an aspect that the current legislation is lacking.

## **Sweden (SE)**

Although not specifically aimed at extreme breeding, the current legislation already covers it since it does prohibit breeding from animals that have characteristics or genetic makeup that are likely to produce unhealthy offspring, behavioural traits included. It emphasises the need for natural reproduction also prohibiting breeding from a dog or cat after two caesarean sections. Furthermore, if an abnormality is noticed at the first c-section, further breeding is prohibited.

Specific breeds are not banned but because of a part of the law regarding the prohibition of breeding from animals with recessive genes that cause disease, breeding animals with excessively large hanging ears or close to nonexistent ears (e.g. Scottish Fold) is indirectly banned.

## **Norway (NO)**

Section 25 of the animal welfare legislation, relating to breeding, states quite simply that, "Breeding shall encourage characteristics resulting in robust animals that function well

and avail of good health." ([Annex 2](#)). It goes on to specify that breeding cannot happen if offspring will likely have natural behaviour affected or if it could be leading to ethical issues. No ownership or breed bans are in place.

A lawsuit was brought in Oslo by the Norwegian Society for the Protection of Animals (NSPA) against the Kennel Club of Norway, the Cavalier King Charles spaniel club and the English bulldog club along with six individual breeders. The NSPA claimed that the breeding of these two breeds contravenes existing welfare laws. The first round was won unanimously by the NSPA.

In October 2023 Norway's Supreme Court confirmed that the breeding of Cavalier King Charles Spaniel is too sick and inbred for breeding to continue, confirming that such breeding is not only unethical but an actual breach of Norwegian law. Regarding English bulldogs breeding although considered legal, it will be subjected to new rules and limits out of which breeding will be considered illegal.

## Switzerland (CH)

While it does not ban certain breeds or ownership (apart from dangerous dogs legislation) it does prohibit the breeding of animals with extreme exterior malformations, which should outlaw breeds such as the Scottish fold. Legislation is clear but enforcement is lacking.

While this survey was taking place, the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO) together with the cantonal veterinary services, developed further the existing legal provisions on dog shows, banning participation of overbred animals: dogs with chronic skin inflammation due to excessive wrinkling and miniature dogs weighing less than 1500 grams when fully grown ([Annex 2](#)).

## United Kingdom (UK)

In 2018, changes to the 2006 animal welfare legislation in England and Wales added a section that prohibits licenced breeders of dogs from breeding from animals where the genotype or phenotype are likely to cause suffering to either the bitch or the offspring. Similar changes were made in Scotland in 2021. The legislation only applies to dogs and only to licensed breeders, leaving many animals unprotected with enforcement remaining a major issue.

## Lack of enforcement

Across the countries sampled the following are the major issues regarding enforcement:

1. Lack of knowledge of the legislation
2. Lack of clarity on law enforcement
3. Lack of training
4. Lack of definition of limits of conformation that are considered unhealthy

5. Seeing extreme feature traits as '*normal for the breed*'<sup>23</sup>
6. Penalties not robust enough to act as a deterrent for breeding extremely featured animals.

The following loopholes exacerbate the lack of enforcement:

1. Even if a ban on breeding certain breeds or certain features exists, the import and the keeping of such breeds or breeds with such features is not prohibited.
2. Legislation may apply to certain species (cats and dogs) but not to others (rabbits, horses etc.)<sup>24</sup>
3. Lack of traceability of breeders which affects potential legal proceedings.
4. Legislation may apply only to registered pedigree animals, leaving, in some countries, the majority of breeding issues unenforceable.
5. Legislation may only apply to licensed breeders so those falling below certain thresholds, or falsely claiming to fall below those thresholds, are not responsible or liable.

## Recommendations on extreme breeding legislation

Based on the survey findings the following recommendations have emerged. By countries we understand the respondents to the survey from the respective country.

1. **EU-wide legislation is key** to fully address the issue of extreme breeding, bringing much needed transparency to the EU's internal market and strengthening the consumer rights.<sup>25</sup> When legislation in Member States exists, its scope and level of compliance diverge having an uneven impact in animal health & welfare. When existing legislation diverges in scope, level of compliance and is not equally stringent, there is a risk to public health and animal health & welfare. Setting up clear rules under the upcoming Kept Animals Regulation and beyond will define the future of animals used for commercial purposes. As stated by many countries' such as Belgium, Finland, Germany or the Netherlands, the many existing trade and importation loopholes are an obstacle to be surmounted only through an EU-wide approach.
2. Extreme breeding **ownership bans** can lead to a reduction of the illegal pet trade. Such a ban should envisage already existing extremely bred animals to live out their lives. Countries such as the Netherlands are working on legislation which prohibits the ownership of both cats and dogs with external characteristics that are harmful to the animal. A similar path is being pursued by Germany.

<sup>23</sup> Normalisation through animal exhibitions and competitions where extreme breeds or extreme features are awarded prizes, perpetuating their desirability and acceptance in society.

<sup>24</sup> Legislation should cover other companion animals affected by selective breeding: ornamental fish Bubble-eye goldfish, miniature horses etc. for whom similar recommendations would apply.

<sup>25</sup> The European Parliament. The illegal trade in companion animals in the EU European Parliament resolution of 12 February 2020 on protecting the EU's internal market and consumer rights against the negative implications of the illegal trade in companion animals (2019/2814(RSP)) [Internet] 2019 [cited 2023 June 14] Available from: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0035\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0035_EN.pdf)

- 3. Banning extreme features over banning a particular breed** has more scope to avoid ambiguity such as whether an animal actually belongs to a certain breed, applying also to crossbreeds and leading to a consistent welfare benefit. Countries such as Finland, Portugal and Spain would like legislation to include mixed-breed animals as well as pure-bred ones.

While addressing extreme features, some existing legislation is limited to **target requirements**, making the standards open to interpretation and in need of further elaboration. For example, there are scientifically substantiated measuring methods that can be used to quantify objectively the morphological characteristics of short-muzzled dogs related to the risks of developing<sup>26</sup> Brachycephalic Ocular Syndrome (BOS) and Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS).

However, a minimum number of criteria has to be agreed to secure enforcement in order to achieve the intended objective. Special attention to the circumstances in which enforcement officers work is key since a lot of measurements or investigations are more often than not, impracticable to carry out.<sup>27</sup>

Countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Norway and Sweden raised these concerns.

- 4. Identification and Registration (I&R)** is key for a full traceability of extreme breeds/features from many perspectives: trade, consumer protection and disease prevention. Hence an EU-wide I&R system and interconnected databases for improved traceability would be essential<sup>28</sup> and it would allow to measure the true scale of extreme breeding.
- 5.** All animals used for breeding should be **fit for breeding**. A health and welfare certification system covering all the particularities of each breed/extreme features is advised. This would consist of a central, independent expert panel who would make decisions based on examination and health reports submitted from vet practitioners. For example, agreeing on mandatory health tests for breeding animals is something that countries such as Sweden are working towards.
- 6.** Legislation should include the health and welfare of future **offspring**. Preventing unnecessary and pointless future pain and suffering should be the final aim. Hereditary defects, diseases, detrimental features and abnormal behaviour should

<sup>26</sup> Van Hagen, MAE. Breeding short-muzzled dogs. Criteria for the enforcement of Article 3.4. of the Animal Keepers Decree (Besluit Houders van dieren) – Breeding Companion Animals [Internet] Utrecht: University of Utrecht 2019 [cited 2023 June 13]. Available from: [https://www.uu.nl/sites/default/files/eng\\_breeding\\_short-muzzled\\_dogs\\_in\\_the\\_netherlands\\_expertisecentre\\_genetics\\_of\\_companionanimals\\_2019\\_translation\\_from\\_dutch.pdf](https://www.uu.nl/sites/default/files/eng_breeding_short-muzzled_dogs_in_the_netherlands_expertisecentre_genetics_of_companionanimals_2019_translation_from_dutch.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Van Hagen, MAE. Breeding short-muzzled dogs. Criteria for the enforcement of Article 3.4. of the Animal Keepers Decree (Besluit Houders van dieren) – Breeding Companion Animals [Internet] Utrecht: University of Utrecht 2019 [cited 2023 June 13]. Available from: [https://www.uu.nl/sites/default/files/eng\\_breeding\\_short-muzzled\\_dogs\\_in\\_the\\_netherlands\\_expertisecentre\\_genetics\\_of\\_companionanimals\\_2019\\_translation\\_from\\_dutch.pdf](https://www.uu.nl/sites/default/files/eng_breeding_short-muzzled_dogs_in_the_netherlands_expertisecentre_genetics_of_companionanimals_2019_translation_from_dutch.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Eurogroup for Animals. The Illegal Pet Trade: Game Over [Internet] 2020 [cited 2023 June 07]. Available from: <https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/library/illegal-pet-trade-game-over>



be prevented from being passed on to the offspring.

7. Legislation should apply to **anyone breeding animals** regardless of their numbers as per registers developed based on the Animal Health Law Delegated Act on Breeding Establishments. Countries such as Sweden consider this aspect to largely impact animal welfare.
8. Legislation should apply to **all animals regardless of their registration status** in their respective kennel club/registry. Legislation pertaining only to registered animals may just contribute to an exodus of kennel clubs/registries with little impact on extreme breeding practices.
9. Lacking some natural abilities impeding common socialisation and habituation<sup>29</sup> because extreme features, may have a negative impact **on both temperament and behaviour**<sup>30,31</sup>, jeopardising the health and welfare of these animals and their ability to become family pets.

Countries such as Denmark, France and Spain feel strongly about the inclusion of both temperament and behaviour aspects in breeding programmes.

10. **Out-crossing**<sup>32</sup> should be encouraged with a view to reverting to less extreme body shapes leading to improved health.<sup>33</sup> However in order to see significant change, several generations will still be suffering with mostly severe health and welfare problems caused by such extreme features.

Countries like Belgium, Austria, Norway and Sweden are considering the opening of the stud books to allow for out-crossing.

The Finnish Kennel Club has had official cross breeding programs since 1997 for different breeds. In June 2023, they accepted a cross breeding project for Cavaliers and for French Bulldogs.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Habituation describes the waning of a response with time when an animal repeatedly experiences a stimulus. This kind of learning is important for familiarising an animal with aspects of his/her care and the environment which are non-threatening, to which it is not expected to react

<sup>30</sup> Voluntary initiative on the health and welfare of pets (dogs and cats) in trade. Responsible Dog Breeding Guidelines endorsed by the EU Platform on Animal Welfare on the 30 June 2022. Supplementary guidance for dog breeders on the socialisation of puppies. [Internet] 2022 [cited 2023 June 07]. Available from: [https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/1b540dbe-8bda-4b5c-8c1a-fabadea1df9a\\_en?filename=aw\\_platform\\_plat-conc\\_guide\\_socialisation\\_puppy.pdf](https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/1b540dbe-8bda-4b5c-8c1a-fabadea1df9a_en?filename=aw_platform_plat-conc_guide_socialisation_puppy.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Voluntary initiative on the health and welfare of pets (dogs and cats) in trade. Supplementary guidance for cat breeders on the socialisation of kittens endorsed by the EU Platform on Animal Welfare on the 30 June 2022. [Internet] 2022 [cited 2023 June 07]. Available from: [https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/9e8be05f-f843-4210-9968-9a9b22bac7dd\\_en?filename=aw\\_platform\\_plat-conc\\_guide\\_socialisation\\_kitten.pdf](https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/9e8be05f-f843-4210-9968-9a9b22bac7dd_en?filename=aw_platform_plat-conc_guide_socialisation_kitten.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> crossing between different breeds

<sup>33</sup> Packer RMA, Hendricks A, Burn. Conference Report: Building Better Brachycephalics 2013. Royal Veterinary College, North Mymms, UK. [Internet] 2013 November 11, [cited 2023 June 14]. Available from: <http://www.ufaw.org.uk/downloads/welfare-downloads/building-better-brachycephalics-2013-report.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Kennelliitto [Internet] 2023 [cited 2023 August 23] Available from: <https://www.kennelliitto.fi/en/about-us/news/finnish-kennel-club-accepted-separate-cross-breeding-projects-cavalier-king-charles-spaniels-and-french-bulldogs>

11. **Artificial insemination** should only be considered exceptionally, such as to increase genetic variability<sup>35,36</sup> and should only be performed by a registered veterinarian.
12. Enabling **elective caesarean sections** should be carefully monitored since female animals should be able to give birth and rear their offspring naturally<sup>37,38</sup>. When a caesarean section has been performed, that bitch/queen must not be bred from again unless a veterinarian certifies that the surgery will not compromise the welfare of the bitch/queen. A maximum of two caesarean sections should be permitted.<sup>39</sup>
13. **Fashion**<sup>40</sup> is the primary influence on the popularity of companion animals, very often related to **media exposure**<sup>41,42</sup>. Despite increase in scientific knowledge of the health consequences of some extreme features<sup>43,44</sup>, high-profile scientific<sup>45</sup> reports, widespread media coverage and education on the matter, appearance over health and welfare is largely prioritised.<sup>46</sup>

The media has a role to play in improving pedigree dog welfare<sup>47</sup>, a moderate use

<sup>35</sup> Voluntary initiative on the health and welfare of pets (dogs and cats) in trade. Responsible Dog Breeding Guidelines endorsed by the EU Platform on Animal Welfare 3 November 2020 - DOC/2020/11972 Rev1, chapter 3, page 8 & 9. [Internet] 2020 [cited 2023 June 13]. Available from: [https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-11/aw\\_platform\\_plat-conc\\_guide\\_dog-breeding.pdf](https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-11/aw_platform_plat-conc_guide_dog-breeding.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Voluntary initiative on the health and welfare of pets (dogs and cats) in trade. Responsible Cat Breeding Guidelines endorsed by the EU Platform on Animal Welfare 3 November 2020 - DOC/2020/11982 Rev1, chapter 3, pages 8 & 9. Available from: [https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/52d8d522-3e6d-4cc8-8b6d-b9dd472e1334\\_en?filename=aw\\_platform\\_plat-conc\\_guide\\_cat-breeding.pdf](https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/52d8d522-3e6d-4cc8-8b6d-b9dd472e1334_en?filename=aw_platform_plat-conc_guide_cat-breeding.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Voluntary initiative on the health and welfare of pets (dogs and cats) in trade. Responsible Dog Breeding Guidelines endorsed by the EU Platform on Animal Welfare 3 November 2020 - DOC/2020/11972 Rev1, chapter 3, page 11. [Internet] 2020 [cited 2023 June 13]. Available from: [https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-11/aw\\_platform\\_plat-conc\\_guide\\_dog-breeding.pdf](https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-11/aw_platform_plat-conc_guide_dog-breeding.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Voluntary initiative on the health and welfare of pets (dogs and cats) in trade. Responsible Cat Breeding Guidelines endorsed by the EU Platform on Animal Welfare 3 November 2020 - DOC/2020/11982 Rev1, chapter 3, pages 11. Available from: [https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/52d8d522-3e6d-4cc8-8b6d-b9dd472e1334\\_en?filename=aw\\_platform\\_plat-conc\\_guide\\_cat-breeding.pdf](https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/52d8d522-3e6d-4cc8-8b6d-b9dd472e1334_en?filename=aw_platform_plat-conc_guide_cat-breeding.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Voluntary initiative on the health and welfare of pets (dogs and cats) in trade. Responsible Dog Breeding Guidelines endorsed by the EU Platform on Animal Welfare 3 November 2020 - DOC/2020/11972 Rev1, chapter 3, page 11. [Internet] 2020 [cited 2023 June 13]. Available from: [https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-11/aw\\_platform\\_plat-conc\\_guide\\_dog-breeding.pdf](https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-11/aw_platform_plat-conc_guide_dog-breeding.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Ross KE, Langford F, Pearce D and McMillan KM. What patterns in online classified puppy advertisements can tell us about the current UK puppy trade. *Animals*, 2023 May 18; 13(10): 1682. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani13101682>

<sup>41</sup> Ghirlanda S, Acerbi, Herzog H. Dog movie stars and dog breed popularity: a case study in media influence on choice. *PLoS ONE*, September 2014, 10; 9(9): e106565. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0106565>

<sup>42</sup> Herzog HA. Forty-two thousand and one Dalmatians: Fads, social contagion and dog breed popularity. *Society & Animals*. 2006 January 01; 14:383-398. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1163/156853006778882448>

<sup>43</sup> Packer RMA, Hendricks A, Burn CC. Impact of facial conformation on canine health: Corneal ulceration. *PLoS ONE*, 2015, May 13; 10(5): e0123827. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0123827>

<sup>44</sup> Packer RMA, Hendricks A, Tivers MS and Burn CC 2015a Impact of facial conformation on canine health: Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome. *PLoS ONE*, 2015 October 28; 10(10):e0137496. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0137496>

<sup>45</sup> Bateson P. Independent Inquiry into Dog Breeding. [Internet] 2009 [cited 2023 June 14]. Available from: <http://breedinginquiry.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/final-dog-inquiry-120110.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Packer RMA, Murphy, D, Farnworth MJ. Purchasing popular purebreds: investigating the influence of breed-type on the pre-purchase motivations and behaviour of dog owners. *Animal Welfare*, 2023, January 01; 26(2):191-201. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.7120/09627286.26.2.191>

<sup>47</sup> Rooney NJ, Sargan DR. Welfare concerns associated with pedigree dog breeding in the UK. *Animal welfare*. 2010 May; 19 (S1): 133-140. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0962728600002335>

if not a total ban on the use of extreme featured breeds would play an important role in mitigating the current high demand for these extreme features.

Some of the countries that acknowledge how the public exposure to images of extreme featured animals impact their purchase decisions are: Bulgaria, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

14. Animals with extreme features in **exhibitions and competitions** are judged upon some quantitative and qualitative criteria considered the blueprint for the “perfect” example of each breed; however, such criteria go against their health and welfare. Following the same rationale as with the impact of media on purchasing behaviour, exhibitions and competitions where animals with extreme features are featured, should be also prohibited. Countries like Germany and Sweden are ahead of the game in this regard.

## Conclusions

Extreme breeding is a cause of avoidable, unnecessary and widespread physical and mental suffering in animals.

EU-wide legislative initiative towards healthier breeding, compliant with improved welfare standards is necessary to be applied to all animals with extreme features, not only to those registered within their respective bodies. Such wide scope will make other initiatives as well as implementation and enforcement the essential pieces of the puzzle with legislation having a prominent role although not to be relied upon alone.<sup>48</sup>

Animals suffering from health problems related to their conformation have become normalised. Prospective owners have to be motivated to demand animals that do not suffer from welfare problems related to extreme conformation and inbreeding. EU-wide legislation stating that unethical breeding causing discomfort, pain and/or disease is illegal<sup>49</sup> as well as an ownership ban of extremely featured animals is essential to put an end to avoidable suffering and to normalise trade.

Illegal pet trade is also fuelled by a strong demand for extreme featured animals that cannot be met at national level and is frequently disguised as the non-commercial movement of pets<sup>50</sup> compromising public and animal health, trade safety and consumer

<sup>48</sup> Bruun CS, Fredholm M, Proschowsky HF, Sandøe P. (2023). Mapping of initiatives to prevent inherited diseases and exaggerated phenotypes in dogs. Department of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, University of Copenhagen. Available from: [https://static-curis.ku.dk/portal/files/333480261/Rapport\\_om\\_avl\\_af\\_racehund\\_e\\_Jan\\_23.pdf](https://static-curis.ku.dk/portal/files/333480261/Rapport_om_avl_af_racehund_e_Jan_23.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Sandøe P, Kondrup SV, Bennett PC, Forkman B, Meyer I, Proschowsky HF, Serpell JA, Lund TB. Why do people buy dogs with potential welfare problems related to extreme conformation and inherited disease? A representative study of Danish owners of four small dog breeds. PLoS one. 2017 February 24; 12(2): e0172091. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0172091>.

<sup>50</sup> IBF International Consulting, VetEffect, Wageningen University & Research Center, Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise: “G. Caporale” (IZSAM). Specific contract SANCO 2013/12364 Final Report. Study on the welfare of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices [Internet] 2013 [cited 2023 June 07]. Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310621032\\_Study\\_on\\_the\\_welfare\\_of\\_dogs\\_and\\_cats\\_involved\\_in\\_commercial\\_practices](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310621032_Study_on_the_welfare_of_dogs_and_cats_involved_in_commercial_practices)

protection, meeting all the necessary features of international organized crime<sup>51,52</sup>.

By taking a strong and united stance on the issue, the EU, highly regarded as a global leader on animal welfare, has the power to significantly and rapidly improve animal welfare within its Member States, significantly reduce organised criminal activity and set an example for the rest of the world to follow.

<sup>51</sup> Eurogroup for Animals. The Illegal Pet Trade: Game Over [Internet] 2020 [cited 2023 June 07]. Available from: <https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/library/illegal-pet-trade-game-over>

<sup>52</sup> BBC News, "Inside the world of organised crime and extreme dog breeding", available on <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-64346415> [accessed 07/06/23]

# Extreme breeding in Europe - Mapping of legislation

## Annexes

### Annex 1: Major traits associated with extreme breeding

Extreme breeding selects for extremes of physical appearance, which can be detrimental to health and welfare and contravene the three common models used to safeguard animal welfare mentioned in the Introduction - the Five Freedoms, the Five Domains and the Five Welfare needs.

Such extreme physical appearance detrimental to both health and welfare is not seen on wild canids, felids nor on free-roaming dogs and cats who tend to have long, straight legs, long tails, forward-facing eyes, short fur, erect or semi-erect ears and long faces.

The European Pet Food Industry Federation (FEDIAF) estimates 104 million dogs, 127 million cats and 29 million small mammals population in Europe.<sup>53</sup> The popularity of extremely featured animals is on the rise, examples include: English Bulldog, French Bulldog, Pug, Cavalier King Charles Spaniel and Chihuahua<sup>54,55</sup>.

In Germany the French Bulldog is the second most popular breed followed by the Chihuahua.<sup>56</sup> The number of yearly registrations of Chihuahuas in the Danish Dog Registry doubled in five years, from 1,487 in 2007 to 3,132 in 2011, so that it became the third most popular breed in Denmark.<sup>57</sup> In the United Kingdom, the French Bulldog became the most popular breed in 2018<sup>58</sup> with the English Bulldog in fourth place in 2020.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Fediaf, the European Pet Food Industry. Annual Report 2023. [Internet] 2023 [cited 2023 July 7]. Available from: [https://europeanpetfood.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/FEDIAF\\_Annual-Report\\_2023.pdf](https://europeanpetfood.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/FEDIAF_Annual-Report_2023.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> Dansk Kennel Klub. Årlige registreringstal. Stambogsstatistik. [Internet] 2015 [cited 2023 June 06]. Available from: <http://www.dkk.dk/side.asp?ID=3065>

<sup>55</sup> American Kennel Club. Most popular dog breeds-full ranking list. [Internet] 2020 [cited 2023 June 23] Available from: <http://www.akc.org/news/the-most-popular-dog-breeds-in-america/>

<sup>56</sup> Check 24. The most popular dog breeds 2022. [Internet] 2023 [cited 2023 June 02]. Available from: <https://www.check24.de/hundehaftpflicht/die-beliebtsten-hunderassen/#top-30>

<sup>57</sup> Sandøe P, Kondrup SV, Bennett PC, Forkman B, Meyer I, Proschowsky HF, Serpell JA, Lund TB. Why do people buy dogs with potential welfare problems related to extreme conformation and inherited disease? A representative study of Danish owners of four small dog breeds. PloS one. 2017 February 24; 12(2): e0172091. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0172091>.

<sup>58</sup> The Kennel Club UK Media Centre. French Bulldogs overtake Labradors as UK's most popular dog breed [Internet] 2018 [cited 2023 June 14]. Available from: <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media-centre/2018/june/french-bulldogs-overtake-labradors-as-uks-most-popular-dog-breed/>

<sup>59</sup> The Kennel Club. Breed registration statistics. [Internet] 2022 [cited 2023 June 14]. Available from: <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media-centre/breed-registration-statistics/>



Such popular brachycephalic breeds have a high prevalence of obstructed labour, an incidence very evident in the English bulldog<sup>60</sup> and, to a lesser extent, the French bulldog. Caesarean sections are required in approximately 60–80% of cases to solve obstructed labour in bitches.<sup>61</sup>

**Figure 1:** Wild canids and felids and free-roaming dogs and cats tend to have long, straight legs, long tails, forward-facing eyes, short fur, erect or semi-erect ears and long faces.



<sup>60</sup> Wydooghe E, Bergmans E, Rijsselaere T, Van Soom A. International breeder inquiry into the reproduction of the English bulldog. *Vlaams Diergen*; 2013 February; 82: 38-43. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.21825/vdt.v82i1.16726>

<sup>61</sup> Gilson SD. Caesarean section. D. Slatter (Ed.), *Textbook of Small Animal Surgery*, WB Saunders Co., Philadelphia, PA (2003), pp. 1517-1520



## How breeds have changed

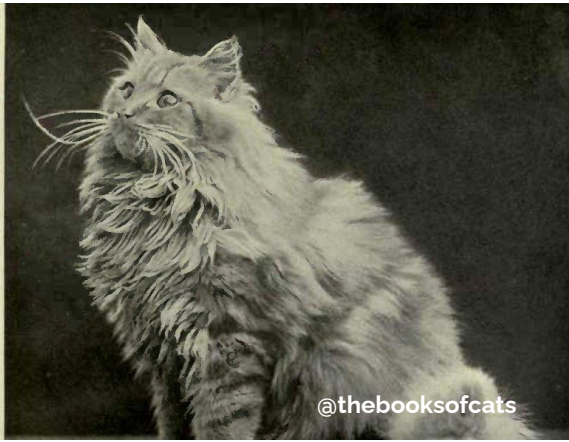
**Figure 2:** Over the last two centuries some breeds have become more extreme. The following images of Bull Terriers, German Shepherds, Pugs, Persians and Siamese are some examples of this, showing that when the will to do so is there, we can change back breeds to their original and functional features.

THEN



NOW





## Some major conformational problems due to extreme breeding

### BRACHYCEPHALY

Shortening of the face leads to exposed eyes due to shallow sockets<sup>62</sup>, excessive soft tissue in the mouth and airways<sup>63,64</sup>, skin folds on the face prone to inflammation<sup>65</sup> and eye trauma<sup>66,67</sup>, dental malocclusion<sup>68,69</sup>, and a range of respiratory problems ranging from

<sup>62</sup> Sieslack J, Farke D, Failing K, Kramer M, Schmidt MJ. Correlation of brachycephaly grade with level of exophthalmos, reduced airway passages and degree of dental malalignment<sup>62</sup> in Persian cats. PLoS One. 2021 Jul 21;16(7):e0254420. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0254420>

<sup>63</sup> Pichetto, M, Arrighi, S, Roccabianca, P, Romussi, S. (2011), The Anatomy of the Dog Soft Palate. II. Histological Evaluation of the Caudal Soft Palate in Brachycephalic Breeds With Grade I Brachycephalic Airway Obstructive Syndrome. Anat Rec, 2011 June 01; 294: 1267-1272. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ar.21417>

<sup>64</sup> Ekenstedt KJ, Crosse KR, Risselada M. Canine Brachycephaly: Anatomy, Pathology, Genetics and Welfare. J Comp Pathol. 2020 April ;176:109-115. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcpa.2020.02.008>

<sup>65</sup> O'Neill DG, Rowe D, Brodbelt DC, Pegram C, Hendricks A. Ironing out the wrinkles and folds in the epidemiology of skin fold dermatitis in dog breeds in the UK. Scientific Reports. 2022 July 06; 12(1). Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-14483-5>

<sup>66</sup> Kafarik C, Fritsche J, Reese S. Corneal innervation in mesocephalic and brachycephalic dogs and cats: assessment using in vivo confocal microscopy. Vet Ophthalmol. 2008 November 06; 11(6):363-367. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1463-5224.2008.00659.x>

<sup>67</sup> Packer RM, Hendricks A, Burn CC. Impact of facial conformation on canine health: corneal ulceration. PLoS One. 2015 May 13; 10(5):e0123827. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0123827>

<sup>68</sup> Mestrinho LA, Louro JM, Gordo IS, Niza MRE, Requiçha, J F, Force, JG, Gawor JP. Oral and dental anomalies in purebred, brachycephalic Persian and Exotic cats. J Am Vet Med Assoc. 2018 July 01; 253(1):66-72. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.253.1.66>

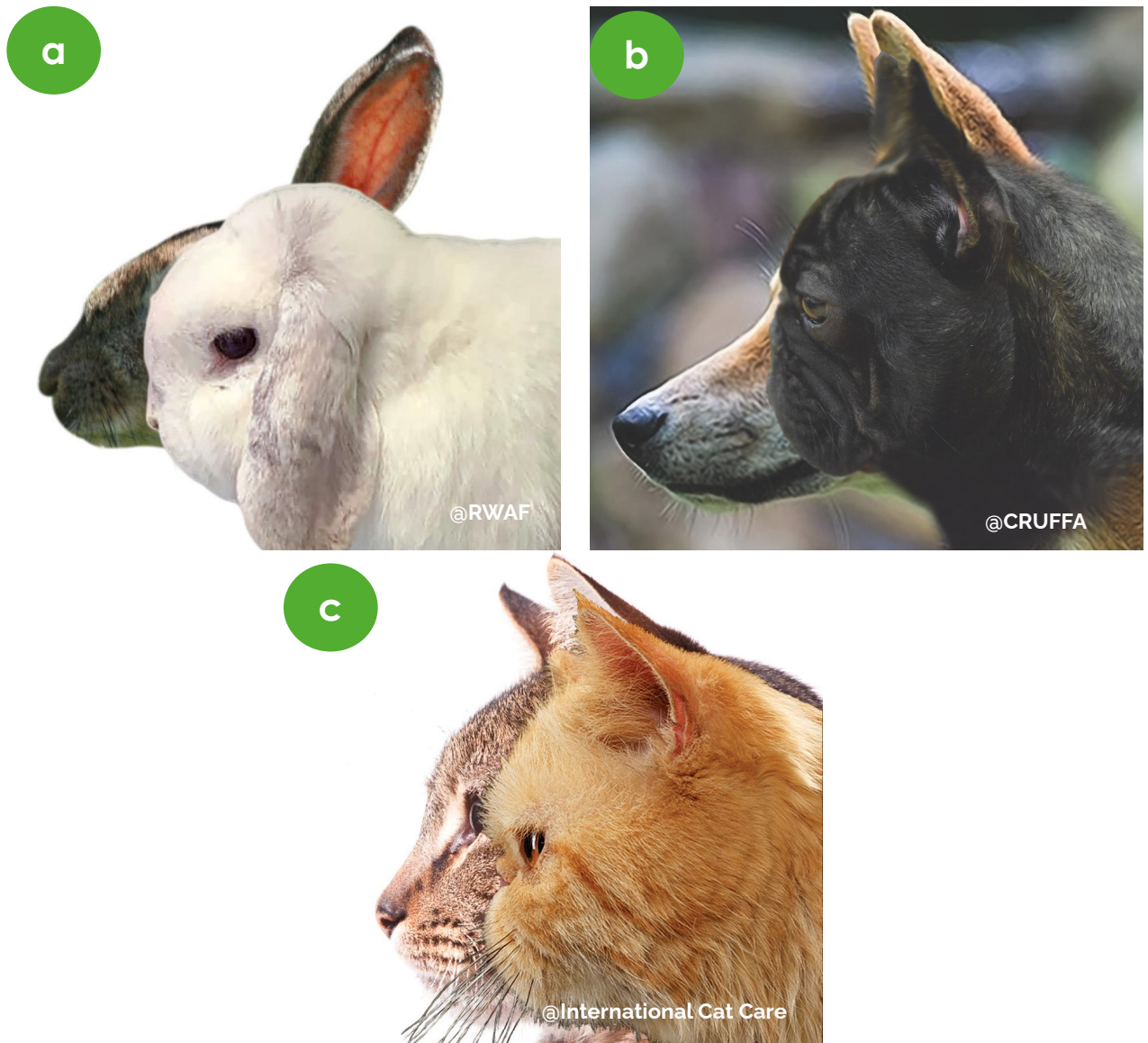
<sup>69</sup> Hale Veterinary Clinic. Why do I say "Stop brachycephalism now"? [Internet] 2017 [cited 2023 June 07]. Available from: [http://www.toothvet.ca/PDFfiles/Stop\\_Brachy\\_2.pdf](http://www.toothvet.ca/PDFfiles/Stop_Brachy_2.pdf)



mild to life-threatening. This is known as Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS).<sup>70</sup>

Unintended consequences of brachycephaly include spinal deformities, tail deformities, paralysis<sup>71</sup>, inherited diseases such as allergies and heart disease, heat exhaustion and well-documented reproductive issues.<sup>72</sup> Morbidity and mortality is high with brachycephalic dogs having, on average, reduced lifespans.<sup>73</sup>

**Figure 3:** a,b,c photographs of brachycephalic animals superimposed onto normal animals show how much we have shortened their faces.



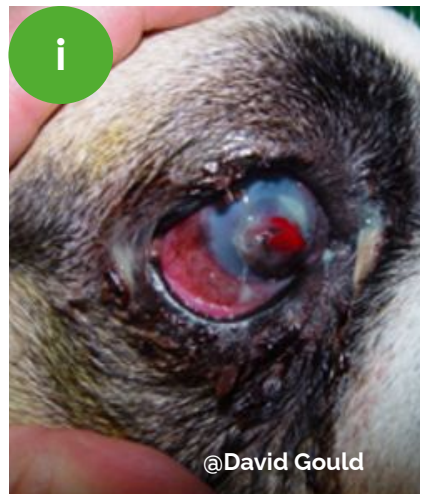
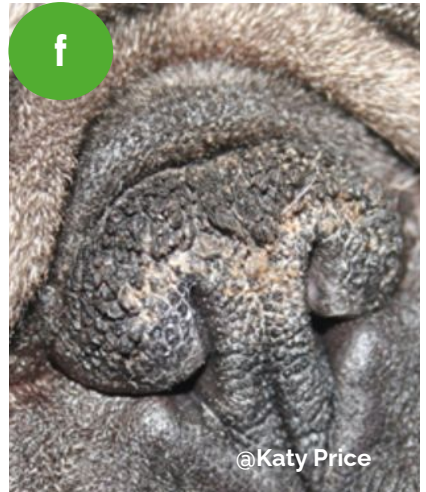
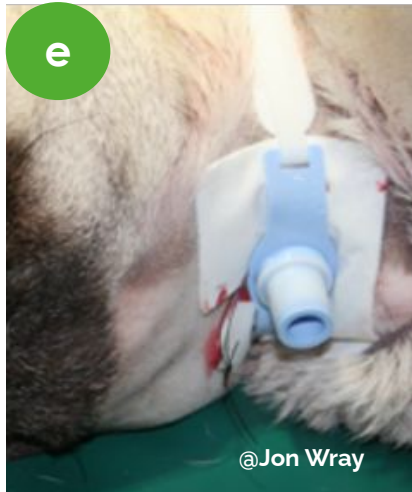
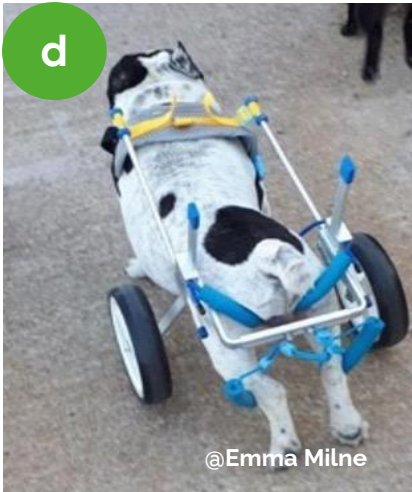
<sup>70</sup> Mitze S, Barrs VR, Beatty JA, Hobi S, Bęczkowski PM. Brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome: much more than a surgical problem. *Vet Q.* 2022 November 15; 42(1):213-223. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01652176.2022.2145621>

<sup>71</sup> Done SH, Drew RA, Robins GM, Lane JG. Hemivertebra in the dog: clinical and pathological observations. *Vet Rec.* 1975;96(14):313-317. doi:10.1136/vr.96.14.313

<sup>72</sup> O'Neill DG, O'Sullivan AM, Manson EA, Church DB, Boag AK, McGreevy, PD, Brodbelt, DC. Canine dystocia in 50 UK first-opinion emergency care veterinary practices: prevalence and risk factors. *Vet Rec.* 2017 July 22; 181(4):88. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1136/vr.104108>

<sup>73</sup> Reich L, Hartnack S, Fitz-Rathgen J, Reichler IM. Lebenserwartung meso-, dolichocephaler und brachycephaler Hunderassen in der Schweiz [Life expectancy of mesocephalic, dolichocephalic and brachycephalic dog breeds in Switzerland]. *Schweiz Arch Tierheilkd.* 2023 April; 165(4): 235-0. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.17236/sat00390>

- d. French bulldog with hemiplegia due to spinal disease
- e. Pug with emergency tracheostomy due to respiratory distress
- f. Severely stenotic nares
- g. Pekingese with exophthalmos
- h. Exotic shorthair with respiratory distress
- i. Ruptured corneal ulcer in a bulldog
- j. French bulldog using a bone to prop its mouth open in order to breath while lying down





## CHONDRODYSTROPHY

Selection for short limbs includes selecting for cartilage defects, joint disease and a predisposition to spinal problems<sup>74,75</sup> including varying degrees of pain and paralysis

**Figure 4:** Images of a Dachshund (left) and a Munchkin cat (right). X-rays of well-shaped Labrador forelimbs vs deformed Basset Hound forelimbs.



Lab antebrachium vs basset  
©Andy Moores

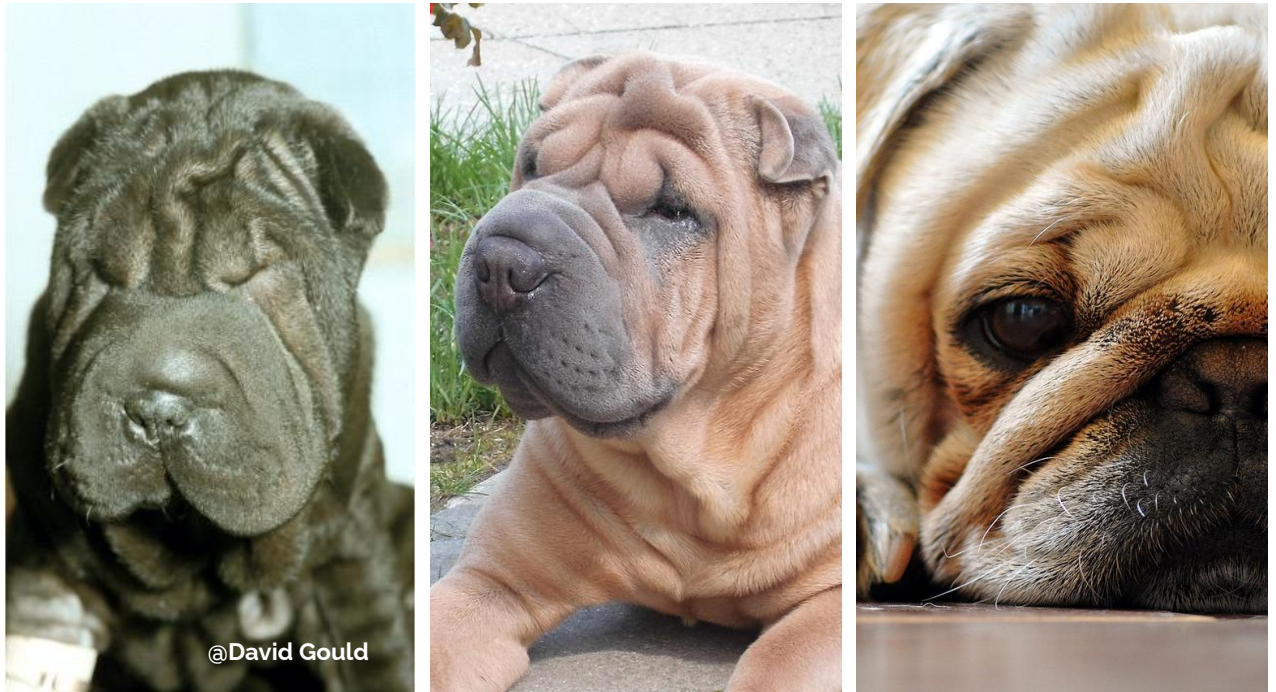
<sup>74</sup> Rusbridge C. Canine chondrodystrophic intervertebral disc disease (Hansen type I disc disease). *BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders*. 2015 December 01; 16(S1). Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2474-16-S1-S11>

<sup>75</sup> International Cat Care. Munchkin [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2023 June 7]. Available from: <https://icatcare.org/advice/munchkin/>

## SKIN FOLDS

Heavy wrinkles and folds are prone to inflammation, pain and often chronic skin infections. In many breeds the folds cause inturning of the eyelids (entropion) and chronic pain and damage to the eyes themselves.<sup>76</sup> In many breeds the folds cause inturning of the eyelids (entropion) and chronic pain and damage to the eyes themselves.

**Figure 5:** Images of Shar-peis (left and centre) and a Pug (right).



## EAR CONFORMATION

Long, heavy, and hairy ears are prone to trauma, chronic discomfort and recurrent infection/inflammation.<sup>77</sup> In the case of the Scottish fold cat the fold is caused by a genetic defect<sup>78</sup> which also affects cartilage all over the body and causes severe, often crippling arthritis.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Today's Veterinary Practice. Skin Fold Dermatitis (Intertrigo) in Dogs. [Internet] 2019 [cited 2023 June 07]. Available from: <https://todaysveterinarypractice.com/dermatology/skin-fold-dermatitis-intertrigo-in-dogs/>

<sup>77</sup> Johnson JC, Burn CC. Lop-eared rabbits have more aural and dental problems than erect-eared rabbits: a rescue population study. Vet Rec. 2019 December 21; 185(24):758. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1136/vr.105163>

<sup>78</sup> Chang J, Jung J, Oh S, Lee S, Kim GH, Kweon O, Yoon J, Choi M. Osteochondrodysplasia in three Scottish Fold cats. J Vet Sci. 2007 September 30;8(3):307-309. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.4142/jvs.2007.8.3.307>

<sup>79</sup> Malik R. Genetic diseases of cats. Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery. 2001 June; 3(2):109-113. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1053/jfms.2001.0121>

**Figure 6:** Images of a Basset Hound (left), a Scottish Fold (centre) and an English Lop (right).



### **DROOPING LIPS AND HEAVY JOWLS**

This conformation causes lips to be dysfunctional which leads to saliva drooling and in some cases skin disease secondary to that. The weight of skin dangling down also causes the eyes to sag (ectropion and diamond eye)<sup>80</sup> and exposes the sensitive tissues of the eyes.

### **EXCESS COATS AND HAIRLESSNESS**

Very long fur is prone to matting, soiling, entanglement<sup>81</sup> and can make mating and nursing difficult in some animals. Hairless animals are prone to sunburn, hypothermia and trauma.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Esson DW. Combined entropion-ectropion. Clinical Atlas of Canine and Feline Ophthalmic Disease. Published online 2015 May 20; Chapter 16. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118840801.ch16>

<sup>81</sup> Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW). Genetic Welfare Problems of Companion Animals. Angora rabbit. [Internet] 2011 [cited 2023 June 07]. Available from: <https://www.ufaw.org.uk/rabbits/angora-long-hair>

<sup>82</sup> International Cat Care. Sphynx. [Internet] 2018 [cited 2023 June 07]. Available from: <https://icatcare.org/advice/sphynx/>



**Figure 7:** Images of an Old English Sheepdog (left), a Sphinx cat (centre) and an Angora rabbit (right).



## Annex 2: Extreme breeding legislation links by country

### Belgium:

[Royal Decree containing approval conditions for animal establishments and the conditions for the trade of animals](#)

[Ministerial Decree determining the animals that show a hereditary disorder as referred to in Article 19, § 2, and 27, § 1, of the Royal Decree of 27 April 2007 concerning the approval conditions for animal establishments and the conditions for the trade of animals \(Applying to the Flanders region only with a similar Ministerial Decree building on the advice of the Brussels Council for Animal Welfare, yet to be drafted as per September 2023\).](#)

### Germany:

[Animal Welfare Act](#)

[Animal Welfare Dog Ordinance](#)

### Greece:

[New framework for the well-being of companion animals - Program "ARGOS" and other provisions \(Art 8 & 45\).](#)

### Spain:

[Law 7/2023 of 28th March](#)

### Luxembourg:

[Animal Protection law 2018 \(Chapter 4, Art 7\)](#)

### Netherlands:

[Animal Keepers Decree \(Art 3. 4\)](#)

### Austria:

[Federal Law on the protection of animals](#)

### Finland:

[Animal Protection 247/1996 Section 8](#)

**NEW** [Animal Welfare Act 693/2023 Section 25](#)

### Sweden:

[Animal Protection Act \(2018:1192\)](#)

[Animal Protection Ordinance \(2019:66\)](#)

[Dog and Cat Regulation](#)

[Breeding regulation for cattle, pigs, horses, sheep and goats](#)

### Norway:

[Animal Welfare Act 2009 \(Section 25\)](#)

### Switzerland:

[Animal Welfare Act 2018](#)

[Ordinance regulating animal breeding](#)

**NEW** [Animal Welfare Information n 18.8](#)

### United Kingdom:

[The Animal Welfare Regulations 2018 \(Schedule 6\)](#)

### Annex 3: Method

A questionnaire aiming at mapping the legislation on extreme breeding in Europe was sent during the second week of May 2023 to the following stakeholders:

- Members and former members of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare Voluntary Initiative group on the health & welfare of pets (dogs) in trade composed of the representatives of the ministries, competent authorities, professionals, civil society and scientists.
- United Kingdom Legal Advisory Group on Extreme Conformation in dogs composed of scientists from the United Kingdom based universities.
- Norwegian Society for the Protection of Animals.
- Eurogroup for Animals' Member Organisations.

Answers were received during the last two weeks of May and analysed during the month of June 2023. Further updates were made until the report was published in November 2023.

### Annex 4: Questionnaire

**Below are the questions that were asked. Where options are not given, the respondents could provide as much or as little information as they chose.**

- Name and surname
- Email address
- Name of the country you are representing
- Name of the Ministry/organisation
- Do you feel extreme conformation in companion animals is seen as a welfare concern in your country\*?
  - To a great extent
  - Somewhat
  - Very little
  - Not at all
- Please feel free to provide more detail on the question above (Do you feel extreme conformation is seen as a welfare concern in your country?)

\*A final decision was made not to include answers to this question due to non representative sampling hence potentially misleading findings.



- Does your country have any laws regarding extreme conformation? (in Companion Animals)
  - Yes
  - No
- Do any such laws protect future offspring? Please provide details.
- Are one or both parent animals included in the legislation?
  - Mother
  - Father
  - Both
- Does your country ban any particular breed? (with regard to extreme conformation) If so, which ones?
- Does your country ban the ownership of any extreme breeds or features? Which ones?
- Is there any legislation on corrective surgeries for extreme features or assisted fertility (e.g. eyelid or respiratory tract surgery, artificial insemination or elective caesarean sections)? Please provide details.
- Do you feel your current laws are enforced/effective? Please feel free to provide as much detail as you deem necessary.
- Have you seen, or do you anticipate seeing, any unintended consequences of such legislation (e.g. spike in numbers of surrendered dogs, black market importation of animals etc.)
- What new laws, if any, would you like to see introduced to tackle extreme conformation?
- Please provide links to current legislation.
- Please feel free to add any other extreme breeding-related comments that you would like to be included in this study.

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