



Strategies on account of increased knowledge about respiratory related health problems in brachycephalic dogs

The Swedish Kennel Club (SKK) has a program working against exterior exaggerations related to respiratory problems in dogs since long. Despite this, the occurrence of respiratory-related health problems is still high in brachycephalic dogs. In the summer of 2015 attention was again drawn to the problems that often affect dogs with short nose, dogs called *flat faced - short skulled - brachycephalic*.

On February 27, 2016, on the initiative of the SKK, more than 100 breeders and representatives for concerned breeds gathered, together with the central management of the SKK, veterinarians, and a number of invited experts, both domestic and international.

Research on the occurrence, reasons for, and effects of brachycephaly was presented at the conference, as well as the ongoing work carried out by breed clubs to improve the health status for the dog breeds in question.

There was a strong desire expressed for powerful measures to be taken with the tools already available. The knowledge of breed-specific conditions around respiratory problems needs to be clarified and structured so that more customized measures may be developed for each breed. A broad cooperation between all stakeholders is needed to make this possible.

Based on this, the following statement is presented regarding breeding of brachycephalic dog breeds and strategies to improve the health status.

Statement

- It is never compatible with the (Swedish) Animal Welfare Act and the SKK Basic Rules to use for breeding, animals with clinical problems that may be associated with brachycephaly.
- To reduce the number of health problems that may be associated with brachycephaly, the breeding selection must consider the general parameters, which affect the breathing ability, such as the *width of the nostrils, nose length, width and depth, the space and firmness of the throat, chest volume and other breed-specific conditions*.



Measures

- a) Reward and prioritize healthy dogs with less pronounced brachycephalic structure in breeding to reduce the health problems in concerned breeds, while paying attention to the correct breed type.
- b) Increase education of breeders, show judges, and veterinarians in assessing dogs' suitability for breeding with regard to the parameters affecting breathability.
- c) Develop examination of breeding animals regarding respiratory function and temperature regulation.
- d) Promote central registration of diagnoses and procedures which are incompatible with use in breeding.
- e) Work internationally towards breed standards that clearly reward anatomical conditions of importance to health.
- f) Evaluate the effects of measures taken with the help of e.g. surveys and monitoring of epidemiological data.

In collaboration with the Swedish Kennel Club and its breed clubs, the Swedish Veterinary Association / the Swedish Society of Veterinary Medicine, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, and the Swedish Board of Agriculture, a number of working groups has been established, aiming to further develop various measures to be taken as soon as possible and at the latest during 2017.