



## The Bulldog Clubs of New Zealand

By Email

29 May 2019

To the Bulldog Members

### **The DogsNZ Survey: Voting on the Bulldog Breed Standard**

DogsNZ has decided to reconsider their decision to not change the Bulldog Breed Standard in 2018. However rather than giving the clubs and members the option to retain the NZ Bulldog Standard they have proposed only two – both of which the clubs and members who submitted opposed last time: the current UK Breed Standard and the FCI standard.

The clubs have strongly opposed this approach by DogsNZ and have undertaken an intensive consultation and engagement campaign. This included the letter we sent to members on 17 May 2019 and the online petition set up by Wellington Bulldog Club President Frank Muncey opposing change and the approach taken by DogsNZ to only offer two options to members. That petition has had considerable support from members and the wider pedigree and international bulldog community. All supporting us.

In response DogsNZ released a survey to ALL DogsNZ members (not bulldog breeders only) asking all members whatever dog breed they owned to vote on the two options they want to change the NZ Bulldog Breed Standard. The clubs, club members and pedigree and obedience and agility DogsNZ members voiced their opposition to the survey and it was withdrawn 24 hours later. We have however heard that DogsNZ may send out another survey to Bulldog members only. Again, only offering their two options for change.

But we still need to tell DogsNZ as clubs and bulldog members what we want. The clubs have considered the reasons given by DogsNZ for change and we do not consider they have enough evidence or reason to change. We consider that this is more about reputation – DogsNZ representatives have told the SPCA and NZVA and other groups that the NZ Bulldog Breed Standard will change. They just don't want to back down and its our standard and our members that are affected.

### **So, what should I do?**

The Clubs believe that bulldog members should have the right to decide all options when it comes to their Bulldog Breed Standard. This includes the right to retain the current NZ Bulldog Breed Standard. We don't care that DogsNZ have said they are only offering two options. We believe that members

should have a fair say. The clubs are advocating and lobbying strongly to ensure that members voices are heard. But we need your help. We need you to make a submission and say what you want.

Therefore, we have attached a draft submission you may wish to use and send to DogsNZ. We have also provided a FAQ sheet of questions and answers you may want to consider as part of deciding if you want to submit on DogsNZs intention to change the NZ Bulldog Standard.

Therefore, the clubs recommend that:

- a. Bulldog members not participate in any DogsNZ survey giving them only two options to vote on. Leaving out the option to retain the existing NZ Bulldog Breed Standard;
- b. Instead Bulldog members use the template submission attached to tell DogsNZ which of the 3 options they want for the NZ Bulldog Breed Standard;
- c. If they want to retain the existing NZ Bulldog Breed Standard that Bulldog Members sign the Bulldog Club Petition at the link [Http://chnq.it/rsHTQXSsm](http://chnq.it/rsHTQXSsm) and
- d. Bulldog Members should tell DogsNZ and their DogsNZ delegates that they do not approve of DogsNZ treatment of them or their clubs.

Please get all submissions in to DogsNZ by **9 June 2019** and if you could let us know you have sent it in so we can keep count that would be great too.

Any questions let us know. We are posting on Facebook too and there is a lot of information on the club and taskforce pages.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Brown – President Southern Bulldog Club

Frank Muncey – President Wellington Bulldog Club

Sue Chaytor – Secretary Central Bulldog Club

Amanda Rutherford – President Auckland Bulldog Club

Sue Tahere – President The French Bulldog Society

## Frequently asked questions about the DogsNZ push to change the Bulldog Breed Standard

### *1. Haven't we already done this?*

#### **Answer:**

Yes, we have!

Last year the New Zealand Bulldog Clubs (**Clubs**) were asked by DogsNZ to consider changing the Bulldog Breed Standard. Suggestions were that we consider changing to the FCI standard or the updated UK standard. The Bulldog Clubs consulted members on this proposal and provided that feedback to DogsNZ. Members also submitted on it and a petition was provided as well. Submissions opposed changing to FCI and supported the retention of the current NZ standard just as the Australian clubs had chosen to and the UK clubs sought in 2011.

In response to these submissions DogsNZ Executive Council agreed to retain the existing NZ version of the Bulldog Standard in its current form.

However, since that decision was made the issue was placed back on the Executive Council agenda and ignoring the submissions of Bulldog Clubs and members the recommendation was made that the Bulldog Standard be changed. The reasons given were for health and the impact upon the reputation of DogsNZ if they didn't change the standard. DogsNZ has therefore decided to put the matter back to the Bulldog Clubs for consultation.

However, this consultation is different they are not asking the Bulldog Clubs if we want to retain our standard which was the supported option. We are offered two choices only:

- a. the option unanimously opposed last time of changing to the FCI standard or
- b. changing the NZ Bulldog Breed Standard to the updated UK standard which was opposed by all bar one individual submitter.

Whatever the change it is proposed to happen from 1 August 2019. The change has been touted as a fait accompli with government officials and stakeholders like the SPCA and NZ Veterinarian Association. That and the fact members aren't being offered the chance not to change the standard makes a mockery of DogsNZ consultation with the Bulldog Clubs and their members.

DogsNZ ignored the vocal opposition of the Bulldog Clubs and their members and released a survey with the two options intended to gain votes to support the change to either of the proposed options. That survey went to ALL DogsNZ registered members from all pedigree breeds, obedience and agility. It was intended for votes, but all it did was infuriate our Bulldog Clubs, our members and many of the other registered breeders who would not want others to vote on their standards, were the roles reversed. DogsNZ withdrew that survey within 24 hours of its release.

Now DogsNZ have sent out another survey to bulldog people. Again, they have offered only two options. Not the option of keeping the current NZ Bulldog Breed Standard.

In contrast the petition the Bulldog Clubs have released asking for support for the Bulldog Clubs and members position from 2018 has passed the 1200 signatures mark which is

significant signal to DogsNZ. Most of those who have signed are from New Zealand, but there is also strong support from Bulldog Clubs and their members internationally too. Bulldog Clubs have sent letters of support and their members have signed the petition as well.

## ***2. Does this affect me?***

### ***Answer:***

If you are a registered DogsNZ member and a breeder or owner of a bulldog or bulldogs then this proposal to change the NZ Bulldog Breed Standard affects you. You should have your say on what you want.

## ***3. We should change the standard for the health of our breeds. Shouldn't we?***

### ***Answer:***

A Breed standard is not a health document it is a pathway not a scientific blueprint. Science comes from health testing and research. So, what does the research say?

- a. We are told there is “sound evidence” for changing the standard. We have asked and received no evidence that the health of NZ bulldogs is affected or in fact will improve if the NZ Bulldog Breed Standard changes. That’s because as far as we can see there is none.
- b. So, what does the international research say?

DogsNZ keep referring to international research relating to breathing and pinched nostrils as the basis for health change and have attached the Cambridge University BOAS poster to their information. That poster is based on research completed in 2017, you might remember it, it was the basis initially for the trademe ban when they said that 95% of pugs, frenchies and bulldogs in NZ were critically affected by significant breathing issues or BOAS. Trademe eventually backed away from that statement when the Bulldog Clubs pushed them to explain where the research actually said that!

The research actually said there were three key external factors we could use to predict BOAS:

- a. bulldogs who were identified to have stenotic (or pinched) nostrils,
- b. high body condition scores i.e. are overweight; and
- c. a neck girth ratio of  $>0.71$  i.e. short necks.

The research however said there was only a weak association of BOAS status with CRF (craniofacial ratio). So, a big head size has a limited relationship to whether a bulldog is going to have BOAS.

- c. What does the NZ Bulldog Breed say?
  - a. The NZ Bulldog Breed Standard does not support stenosis: nostrils large and wide.
  - b. Weight Bulldog is 25 kg. (55 lbs) for a dog and 22.7 kg. (50 lbs) for a bitch – not overweight; and
  - c. necks are expected to be moderate.

- d. DogsNZ emphasis the need to remove the head description of “Massive”. As we said above head size has a weak basis for BOAS.

So, if the issue is health then based on this research by Cambridge University which is the leading authority on BOAS then it seems that the Bulldog Breed Standard does not need to change. There is no research that says that health issues in NZ Bulldogs is directly connected to the NZ Bulldog Standard.

Health testing does improve health and the Bulldog Clubs are implementing their Bulldog and French Bulldog Health Schemes and we are not alone the UK and US and Australian clubs have schemes too.

***4. DogsNZ said that they were told that the change to the UK breed standard has improved the health of bulldogs. So, we should change to it?***

***Answer:***

That’s not actually accurate.

We understand the compelling and clear evidence” DogsNZ is referring to is based on a NZ vet’s comment about the change in the UK standard improving the bulldog health. The UK clubs however who have been health testing far longer than 2011 have actually said that the health testing that their members are doing as part of the UK Clubs Health Scheme has led to the breed health improvements. As improvements are made with each generation, you don’t get major identifiable improvements across a breed in the just 8 years since the UK Standard was changed. It takes time and work.

We understand that the changes made to the UK Bulldog Breed Standard were generally opposed by the UK Bulldog Clubs and were largely made to please animal rights groups. It is worthwhile noting that the changes imposed in 2011 in the UK have done little to stop the tide of criticism against the brachycephalic breeds with further campaigning now in place to change the standard yet again. Nothing will ever be enough for CRUFFA and others bar a complete ban of brachy breeds (and pedigrees thereafter). Change for change sake does nothing. Education and health testing do work.

***5. Well whatever the case why don’t we change? What’s wrong with either of the two options?***

***Answer:***

The question is probably what’s right with them and is it enough to require us to change our standard?

As we have said the breed standard is not a scientific document it is a historical guideline provided by previous breeders to the next generation based on their experiences and what they consider are the historical features of the breed. The British Bulldog is an ancient breed and has a long and proud history which should be contained in the Breed Standard.

There is not a lot of difference between the FCI and updated UK Breed Standard format mostly. They both remove some of the distinct features of the Bulldog Breed. But a key difference is that changes that were made in 2011 and 2010 to those standards were not made by bulldog breeders. In the UK many of the Bulldog Clubs there opposed the changes. The changes were made because their national kennel club wanted to appease the animal rights groups who were attacking them.

However, those changes have not stopped the animal rights groups continuing to attack bulldogs in the UK and they are now pushing for MORE changes to the UK Bulldog Breed Standard. Changes that if approved there (and given the push here to change) we will likely find are put into the NZ Bulldog Breed Standard against the will of our Bulldog Clubs and members.

At some point the Breed Standard we have will look nothing like our beloved breed and it will change nothing. CRUFFA and others don't care they would prefer to ban our breed and all pedigree dogs.

If we don't say no now, when? If its not for health and only to make the animal rights people happy in the UK and in New Zealand why do it? They will never think enough is enough.

***6. But if we don't change the standard the government is going to change it for us?***

***Answer:***

The government is not going to change our breed standard. DogsNZ are trying to and trying to say that if we don't change then we will be regulated and forced to change. That is not accurate either.

In their opinion on selective breeding the National Animal Welfare Advisory Group (NAWAC) to the Minister responsible for Animal Welfare said about breed standards:

*"There are likely to be many breeders, both within and outside the NZKC, who do not test their dogs prior to breeding. NAWAC recommends that where there are tests available for known inherited diseases or defects, these should be used before a breeding programme is undertaken.*

*However, a lack of technology should not be viewed as a barrier to improve welfare in affected dog breeds. Some conformational and inherited disorders are intrinsic to breed standards and these could be addressed without genetic technology. "*

So, the emphasis for NAWAC is on health testing first with changes to breed standards after if there is a lack of testing. There are many tests for health issues associated with Bulldogs including the Cambridge University Exercise Tolerance Test which is now being provided in New Zealand. The Bulldog Clubs have Health Schemes including the key tests and DogsNZ has the Accredited Breeder Scheme.

The club's representative has meet with government officials from MPI and the advisory group. That representative said to them that the key focus for the Bulldog Clubs the work on health testing and education that will improve Bulldog health. Not changing the Bulldog Breed Standard.

MPI officials have said bulldogs and brachycephalic breeds are not on their workplan for any regulation. The government have an animal welfare framework that does not mention bulldogs or brachycephalic breeds at all. It does say that people in charge of animals believe animal welfare matters, and have the skills and capacity to meet animal welfare standards. That includes us and we do not need to change the breed standard to do it.

We believe that rather than change the standard we should be talking more with government and other stakeholders. Telling them about what we are doing to improve health, again through health testing and education.

### ***7. What are the Bulldog Clubs doing?***

#### ***Answer:***

The Bulldog Clubs have and are doing A LOT.

We have launched two health schemes: one for bulldogs and one for French bulldogs. We have written education material for breeders and for owners. We have written articles for our members, other clubs here and overseas, we have gone to shows and expos to educate and we have spoken for the breeds at meetings with the Minister for Animal Welfare, officials, NAWAC and with private companies like Trademe. We have a strong social media presence too and are always advocating for the betterment and health of our breeds and supporting our members.

### ***8. What are the health schemes?***

#### ***Answer:***

In 2016 the Bulldog Clubs joined together to establish a taskforce to work on a range of things for them including health schemes. In 2017 the Bulldog Clubs consulted on the types of health schemes members wanted. The response from members was clear. Our health schemes had to be:

- a. **Comprehensive** - providing guidelines and testing relating to the conformation of the whole dog not just one issue.
- b. **Breeder led and developed** – Bulldog and French bulldog breeders needed to help to develop the tests.
- c. **Specialist Review** – working with the vets who are brachycephalic specialists and understand our breeds to develop the testing and the forms. Utilising forms and requirements for grading of proven international health organisations including Penn Hip, Orthopaedic Foundation for Animals in the US, Sydney University and Cambridge University.
- d. **Provable** – with certificates for each level which can be promoted with the public as proof of testing.
- e. **Accessible** – tests need to be accessible to breeders in both the North Island and South Island and should not be captured.

- f. **Responsible** – Breeders and Bulldog Clubs needed to be confident that their information would be respected and protected. Not used for purposes they had not intended and only shared with the consent of the owners.
- g. **Engaged** - take an education and inclusive approach rather than use force. Mandatory schemes were viewed as more likely to alienate and we would lose the opportunity to bring in breeders who were new to the breeds or not engaged with the Bulldog Clubs.

We have had a good coverage of breeders both North and South Island joining the schemes and we are promoting it. It will take time to build but such schemes have been very successful overseas with thousands of dogs going through them over time, which has to improve the overall quality of the breeds. That is what we are aiming for.

An issue of contention with DogsNZ has been their desire to get access to testing results from scheme members. We have told DogsNZ there is nothing stopping members from giving them that information but we won't unless told to do so by the member who owns that information. This complies with the Privacy Act and with the health schemes privacy statement.

### ***9. Why are the Bulldog Clubs fighting? Why don't they just accept and agree to a change?***

#### ***Answer:***

The Bulldog Clubs are fighting because they believe that changing the NZ Bulldog Standard is not the answer to the issues DogsNZ has identified. We don't believe it will fix them it will just make it easier for more changes to be made later and for the clubs and members to lose the bulldog breed as we know it.

Also, we were told by members in 2018 what they wanted and believe that DogsNZ should stick with their original decision to accept the Bulldog Clubs and members submissions. Changing their minds to keep their reputation with the SPCA and NZVA and other groups that they have told that change will happen is not a fair reason to ignore the Bulldog Clubs.

Further, the Breed standard is not a scientific document. it's a pathway from the breeders of the last generation to the next. They are open to interpretation and always will be even if you change them. Frankly we consider that concentration on education and health testing will be more effective than the changes proposed in improving the health of NZ bulldogs.

Finally, we think that DogsNZ approach is less democracy and more dictatorship and we don't think that is fair. Nor do we think that was what was intended when the NZ Kennel Club was formed in 1886? They say on their website Dogs NZ has a proud heritage. But it seems that not just the name changed when the NZ Kennel Club became DogsNZ, they lost their interest in supporting their member Bulldog Clubs and members.

The Wellington Bulldog Club is over 100 years old. The Auckland Bulldog Club was established 93 years ago. Over thirty years ago the Southern Bulldog Club was created. The Central Bulldog Club and The French Bulldog Society were established more recently in the last 5 years. All the Bulldog Clubs and their members deserve to be listened to as the custodians of their breeds. They have a voice and they won't be silent.

## **10. What can we do?**

### **Answer:**

Raise your voices for your bulldogs and the current NZ Bulldog Breed Standard. You can do that by:

- e. Signing the Bulldog Club petition at link [Http://chnng.it/rsHTQXSm](http://chnng.it/rsHTQXSm)
- f. Submit your opinion before 9 June 2019 to DogsNZ on:
  - a. Your preferred option for the NZ Bulldog Breed Standard and if that is to keep the one, we have said so. Don't just accept that you have to do what DogsNZ dictates you do. You are the custodian of your bulldogs and the future of them,
  - b. Tell DogsNZ what you think of their process and that they need to listen to the Bulldog Clubs and you as a member. Their approach has been unfair and undemocratic. DogsNZ cannot act like a dictator and get away with it.
  - c. You can use the template submission attached to tell DogsNZ which of the 3 options they want for the NZ Bulldog Breed Standard including retaining the current NZ Bulldog Breed Standard.
- g. Don't participate in any DogsNZ survey giving you only two options to vote on. Leaving out the option to retain the existing NZ Bulldog Breed Standard. That is not a fair process. Submit directly instead.
- h. Tell DogsNZ and your DogsNZ delegates that you do not approve of DogsNZ treatment of you and the Bulldog Clubs.

The Bulldog Clubs will also be submitting and will be advocating and lobbying to make DogsNZ listen to members and the clubs.