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THE BULLDOG CLUB COMBINED TASKFORCE

Working for the betterment of our breeds

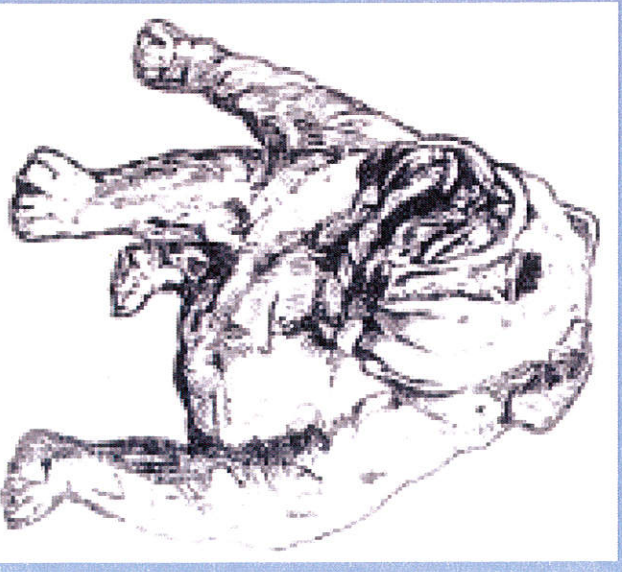
Bulldog Breed Standard Contents

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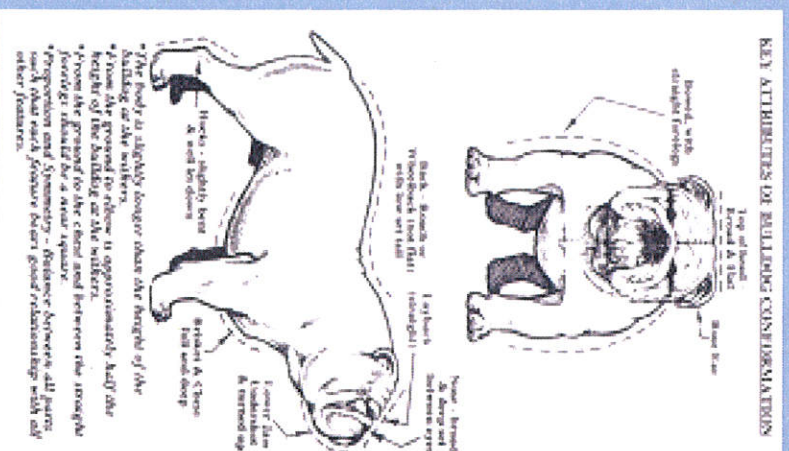


The Bulldog Breed Standard?

- The Bulldog of old was bred to bait bulls. Our standard is reflective of that purpose. While we acknowledge that the Bulldog is no longer bred for that purpose its essence should not be lost to the breed standard.
- Of the three standards considered – current, FCI and updated UK we remain of the view that the current NZ standard is the most representative of the Bulldog and its design for purpose.
- Perceived extremes in the wording should always be referenced against the proportions of the dog as a whole.
- We consider that much of the issue is not the standard. But the need for better education as to what is a bulldog bred to standard, not aesthetics and always to be healthy. A badly breathing dog could never have brought down a bull, anymore then it could move in the show ring. Bulldog breeders who show know their dogs must be healthy.



The Bulldog Standard In Summary



- The NZ Bulldog standard takes into account the features that make the bulldog the distinctive breed that it is. The problems do not lie in the standard but rather with the lack of knowledge of the breed and its characteristics.
- When judging the bulldog the breeder and judge need to be mindful of TYPE, BALANCE and SOUNDNESS. The bulldog, even though its original purpose – baiting bulls – is now obsolete, it is the very reason that the bulldog existed and so when breeding and judging it, you have to ask yourself, is this specimen able to do what it was designed to do?
- In breeding and judging the bulldog, the responsibility lies with both breeders and judges to understand and correctly interpret the standard, not change it so that those who do not take the time to understand the breed. The current NZ Bulldog Standard gives descriptors on different aspects of features to help guide the interpretation. The UK and FCI standards have removed such descriptors from their standards.
- We don't just lose extreme words when changing to FCI or the UK standard we lose much more of what makes up the bulldog: its distinctive roach and its upturn, its nose and layback.
- We maintain that the current NZ Bulldog standard is the best of the three being tabled, being the one that is the best representative of the Bulldog and its design for purpose.

Health Evidence?

- Dogs NZ are claiming that two main studies provide evidence that the standard needs changing.
Packer et al (2015) Impact of Facial Confirmation on Canine Health and Corneal Ulceration
- Study that was concerned with facial morphology in domestic dogs leading to eye disorders
- 14 month cross sectional study on dogs in UK based on small animal referral hospital
- The sample constructed of 700 dogs with 31 affected by corneal ulcers
- The most commonly affected was the pug
- On page three of the article where breed standards are referred to the bulldog standard is not listed.
- Of the 700 dogs, 13 % were cross breeds with 87% pure breeds
- Most common breed with these issues was the Labrador Retriever (56 dogs 8%).
- The Bulldog was not in the top five dog breeds of this research.
- Limitations of applying this research: That the bulldog was not the top dog affected
- And the sample was affected. So whatever useful points come out of this research difficult
- To generalise this to bulldogs in general. The other problem is that the researchers
- combine brachycephalic in one group- but these breeds are very different to each other.

Health Evidence

- Packer et al (2012). *Do dog Owners perceive the clinical signs related to conformational inherited disorders as 'normal' for the breed? A potential constraint for improving canine welfare.*
- Aim of the study was to quantify owner recognition of clinical signs of BOAS-Affected dogs reported that their did or did not have a history of breathing problems.
- They said their research reported a disparity in recognition and perception of owners with well over half the affected dog owners reporting a high frequency and severity of clinical signs in their dogs, without perceiving them as a problem.
- They are claiming that what is 'normal for the breed' is a likely constraint to improving the welfare of clinically affected animals, as being normal may be a perception of no requirement to change it, i.e. a culture of acceptance certain problems in a breed.

Limitation: five months of study- all dogs refereed to vets.

Nothing to say that altering the breed standard would change this,

Owners denial of all aspects of animal ownership is full of people not knowing. Surely, this research is trying to draw conclusions, that are a kind of so what - it can't be used to say that all breeders and owners are unaware of these issues. We know this isn't the case.

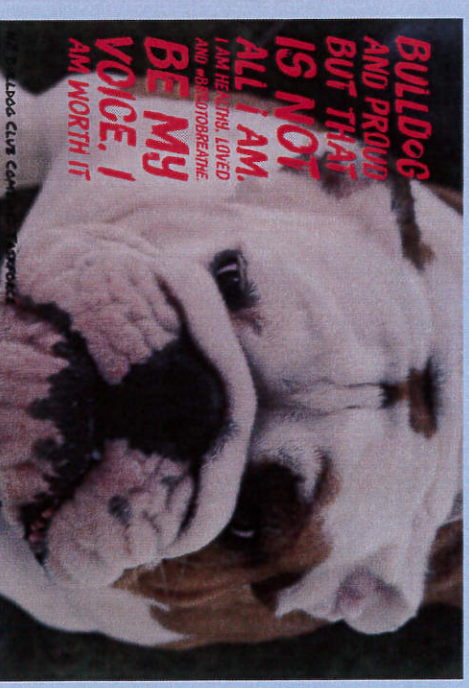
Health Evidence

Liu et al (2017) Conformational risk factors of brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome (BOAS) in pugs, French Bulldogs, and Bulldogs.

- 201 Bulldogs, assessed by BOAS grading, Body weight, nostril stenosis and tape measurements
- Shows signs of promise but still needs much more work due to limitations
- Looking at stenotic nostrils as a signifier of possible BOAS
- Their research is suggesting higher BOAS grades found in connection to eye and skull width, and neck girth
- However they confirm vast differences in accuracy in measurements between qualified staff – “showed large errors” (p.17)
- These errors reported as directly affecting the ratios
- Neutered dogs showed 8.1 times greater chance of BOAS – is this weight related?
- Dogs NZ breed standard states weight 22kgs female, and 25kgs male – mean average of 23.5kgs
- The Mean average weight of these dogs tested is 2.5kgs over the standard. This is a lot of extra weight
- 35.3% of dogs in this research were classified obese
- They conclude that obesity is a huge factor in BOAS problems, similar to sleep apnoea in humans – greater neck girth directly affects severity
- They conclude that only “a weak association of BOAS status with craniofacial ratio” (p. 20).
- As all dogs were tested in UK, “the results may have limited significance on these breeds in other regions of the world” (p. 21).

Health Evidence

- Pedersen et al (2016) *A genetic assessment of the English Bulldog*
- The Study examines genetic diversity among 102 registered English Bulldogs used for breeding.
- The Veterinary Genetics Laboratory (VGL) (UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, Davis, CA, USA) provided DNA samples 102 registered English Bulldogs; 87 of the dogs were from the USA, six from Finland, three each from Canada and Austria, and one from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Argentina.
- Thirty-seven DNA samples were collected from whole Blood of English bulldogs submitted for various diagnostic tests



“English bulldogs have very low genetic diversity resulting from a small founder population and artificial genetic bottlenecks” (Pederson, 2016, p. 6).

Page 4 of Pederson in the Methods section says that the dogs were DNA tested from coat colour (coat colour is known to have genetic similarity)
Sample size was small. Of the sample many were in for disorders.

“...perhaps veterinarians are more concerned about breeds that are perceived to be more problematic, e.g. as taught during veterinary training, or continuing education (Farrow, 2015).

Health Evidence

- Dr Amy Scott Thomas (Geneticist) commenting on Pederson (2016)
- The bottleneck occurred when they tried to revive the breed by only have a select few dogs to use so while humans have directed breeding programs, they had limited genetic variation to begin with. The PCA plot further confirms that all the dogs within this study have similar ancestry. What would have been nice to see was two distinct clusters which would indicate the unhealthy dogs are from one lineage and the healthy from another. To be fair the number of dogs from outside the USA is very low and I would be interested to see how dogs from Africa and the pacific region fit with this research. If “our” dogs have similar genetic background then there is limited to scope to improve the breed based on genetics. The lack of alleles at each loci is concerning especially when only a couple dominate.
- I guess the point is even if we breed a healthy Bulldog to a healthy Bulldog they have the same genetic makeup as the unhealthy dogs so you aren't actively eliminating the unhealthy traits with respect to the genetics because they all have the same genetics. If the PCA graph had shown that the unhealthy dogs had dissimilar genetic material to the healthy dogs then you could say that by breeding healthy dogs together removes the chance of producing unhealthy bulldogs. But this doesn't seem to be the case.
- However the sample was severely compromised.....

Two letters from Vets

- Re proposed changes to Bulldog breed Standard.

- I am a big fan of the brachycephalic breeds as a whole, and while I am concerned about health issues within the breeds and happy to see efforts to improve the health of the breeds, in particular brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome, I have the following reservations regarding the proposal to change the current breed standard.

- While the whole-body barometric plethysmography study by Lui Et al is clearly very well planned and executed, it does leave questions re effects of obesity and lower airway disease on BOAS, and whether undiagnosed lower airway disease and/or obesity were causes of obstructive airway symptoms rather than brachycephaly in some individuals.

- Also, while the comment that “key BOAS researchers at Cambridge University had seen vast improvements in health of bulldogs since change of the UK standard and implementation of breeding guidelines based on BOAS scoring...” is encouraging, it would seem appropriate to wait until some objective data is published that confirms a definite link between UK breed standard changes and BOAS scoring, and “vast improvements in health” before adopting the same breed standard changes.

- From the information I have seen, it does seem stenotic nares, and constricted nasal conformation in general, are significant risk factors for BOAS and for progression of airway pathology due to negative pressure during inspiration, so if any change is currently justified, it would relate only to nares conformation pending more follow up data.

- Yours sincerely,

- Russell Cowie, BVSc.

Vets on Riverbank

TEPIVS

Equine & Farm Veterinary
Services Ltd.

To whom it May Concern,

I am a small animal Veterinarian, at Vets On Riverbank in Otaki, with considerable experience in brachycephalic breeds. We currently have over one hundred French and British Bulldogs registered on our clinic database. The majority of these dogs lead active lives on lifestyle blocks or large town sections with our area boasting great beach, river and bush walks for dogs.

Our clinic has rarely diagnosed BOAS cases over the past five years, and certainly not in brachycephalic breeds that have had healthy body condition scores and not been suffering from pre-existing and untreated stenotic nares. I have had some acute cases of suspected BOAS which have turned out to be allergic nasopharyngitis and responded rapidly and completely to medication. The last dog I referred to Massey University Veterinary Teaching Hospital (MUVT) for suspected BOAS was over three years ago in a 3 year old pug, this dog had previously had surgery at MUVT for widening of stenotic nares and folded flap palatoplasty. The clinical signs exhibited turned out to be triggered by chronic allergic rhinitis/nasopharyngitis and on examination at Massey it was deemed that the dog's soft palate was an optimal size.

I am a strong advocate for corrective widening surgery of stenotic nares in brachycephalic breeds at an early age. We routinely check for stenotic nares at puppy vaccination consultations and educate our clients on the importance of surgically repairing this. We also strongly promote appropriate weight management and educate our clients on the importance of an ideal body condition score throughout life, particularly in brachycephalic breeds.

In my experience owners of brachycephalic breeds tend to be one of the most motivated client groups when it comes to seeking and following our veterinary health recommendations for their dogs. They are eager for knowledge on the health and wellbeing of their pet and take our advice seriously. I think education of clients/brachycephalic dog owners is key to the very low incidence of BOAS diagnosed at our clinic, alongside early surgical widening intervention of stenotic nares when required.

Kate G

Kate Georgetti BVSc

19 June 2019

Problems with Health Research

- Limited samples from often affected groups, with data from Insurance companies and some research is paid for by animal welfare groups who are in direct opposition to pedigree dogs. The pressure from these often radical groups cannot be ignored.
- Drawing “so what” conclusions- yes there are owners who don't know the breeds- but there is bad dog ownership everywhere.
- There looks to be cherry picking of results.
- The correlation causation argument- there is a correlation between umbrellas and rain but umbrellas don't cause rain.
- Of the research that is emerging here the results look different and these differences should be explored.

Bulldog Club Surveys

- As part of building information about NZ bulldogs and French Bulldogs, our clubs have started to release surveys. The purposes for which are to:
 - Uncover answers - what is important to members, and gather meaningful opinions, comments, and feedback
 - Evoke discussion by members on key topics
 - Allow the clubs to make decisions based on objective information
 - Compare results between our survey data and other data and research

Of the two surveys we have released in less than a week we have information about over 300 Bulldogs and French Bulldogs and their breeders and owners experiences here in New Zealand.

The UK Baseline Survey

- The baseline – UK Survey
 - In 2014, the UK Kennel Club carried out the Pedigree Breed Health Survey. This was a nationwide survey of UK pedigree dogs to help understand the health of each breed.
 - The questionnaire was divided in to sections which concentrated on such topics as general health, behaviour, causes of death, breeding and birth defects.
 - Information gathered from the survey was intended to help each breed to prioritise health conditions, and can be used to improve, or maintain, the health and welfare of future generations of dogs.

Mortality Survey

- The first was a Mortality Survey for Bulldogs released on the 3rd of July 2019. The questions used aligned with the UK survey.
- That survey will be open for some time but we have been able to identify some interesting conclusions from information received thus far from the owners and breeders of 71 bulldogs and compare them to the UK survey results.

Initial Conclusions

- They are:
 - NZ bulldogs on average live longer – while the median age at death in the UK was just 6 years, here in NZ the median is 10 years
 - However the causes of death are more aligned. The three primary causes of death across both countries are:
 - Old age – UK (20.51%)/NZ (44.92%)
 - Heart Failure – UK(17.95%)/NZ (13.04%)
 - Cancer – UK (15.38%)/NZ (17.39%)

Opportunities

- The survey data and our health scheme data provide opportunities to participate in research that we identify has specific relevance to our breeds.
- There are a number of researchers internationally who are undertaking research relating to brachycephalic breeds.
- We are talking to those researchers, research funders and our sister clubs in the UK, US and Australia about working alongside them.

We have identified 3 pieces of research thus far of Interest.



The Clubs Base Position

- The Clubs support the retention of the existing NZ Bulldog Breed Standard. We do not want the alternatives of the FCI nor the updated UK Standard.
 - As discussed we consider that the standard does not require amendment to reflect many of the issues raised in the research including the research referred to reflect the predictors of BOAs in Liu nor do we consider that the other reports provide a sufficient bases for change either
 - The work we are doing with our health schemes and recent surveys suggest there is a difference between our dogs and those overseas and we think this needs to be investigated preferably before changes are made to the breed standard.

The Clubs Position

- We do acknowledge that the understanding of the current standard could be improved. We also recognise that DNZ seeks change and the removal of “extreme” words.
 - Some of the words could be amended to recognise the concerns raised by CHW. We also consider that the reference to proportion in the standard could be more greatly accentuated. A bulldog should always be in proportion.
 - However, we consider that an entire change to the UK updated standard or FCI would not be necessary for the changes sought. There needs to be a balance between ensuring a standard that reflects health and one that goes so far as to lose the essence of the breed and its original purpose.

Proposals

- Recognising all of the above we consider a pragmatic approach is needed to resolving the issue of what to do with the NZ Bulldog Breed Standard.
- The first is to deal with the immediate desire of DNZ to amend the standard and to respond to concerns about perceived extremes.
- The second is to consider a longer term approach to identify and develop research and information that more accurately reflects the health reality of our breeds and or responds to the issues we are identifying that affect the health of our breeds in NZ.

Stage 1

- We would therefore like to propose a multi pronged plan:
We will work with DNZ and agree amendments to the current breed standard to remove the words deemed to be extreme from a health perspective.
 - These changes could be agreed relatively quickly.
 - This would be an acknowledged positive outcome – changes made and agreed.

Stage 2

- Thereafter:
 - We will progress the work we are doing to build our education resources and to engage with our members and with registered breeders and owners of registered bulldogs and French bulldogs outside of our clubs
 - We will continue to build support for our health schemes and complete the NZVA endorsement process
 - Anyone not wanting to be part of our schemes can use the ABS

Stage 2

- We will continue to undertake surveys and to get an understanding of what is happening with our breeds here
- We will take that survey information and the information from the health scheme and identify opportunities to participate in research of relevance to our breeds. We will consult with our members on those opportunities and which will be supported by them as the owners of the data
- Based on the research and survey data collected we can determine if any other changes are required to the standard. We will undertake to come back to DNZ and propose those changes if the data and research support them.

Timeline

- We anticipate Stage 2 will take 6 months to a year at least. We don't know when the brachycephalic research will be completed by Massey but hopefully we can include any conclusions from that report as well as part of our consideration.
- This is in our view a way forward which is both pragmatic and allows all parties to move forward constructively. DNZ having changed the standard and the clubs to progress the work they wish to do.

Questions?

