

24 January 2018
The Bulldog Club Taskforce
Press/Media release

Trade Me ban on Pugs, British Bulldogs and French Bulldogs

The Bulldog Club Taskforce promotes and supports responsible breeding practices to produce active and healthy French and British Bulldogs. The Taskforce is made up of the 5 national bulldog breed clubs who jointly have well over 150 years' experience with these breeds. Breeds themselves that have been in existence for centuries. The Bulldog Club Taskforce's aim is to be advocates for our breeds and to educate and inform owners and breeders of bulldogs. We are actively working with Dogs NZ and other welfare groups to address health issues and to work through the often-exaggerated views about the poor health of these dogs to find ways to address actual problems. We are deeply frustrated that reputable and responsible breeders and their practices are being compromised by the actions of irresponsible and opportunistic individuals, however believe that many of the issues raised in the media in recent weeks have been grossly overstated. While we do not support the use of Trade Me by irresponsible breeders to sell unhealthy dogs, it is our opinion that the banning of the advertising of these breeds is extreme and the action is irresponsible. To do so will push these sellers to sites with less concern for the welfare of dogs and pups and appropriate breeding practices.

We are also concerned that Trade Me in making bold and generalized statements about the health of these breeds and the impact of BOAS has failed to undertake basic due diligence by speaking to specialists in the field in New Zealand. The largest brachycephalic breed vet practice in the North Island, has stated that of all the French bulldogs seen, in their clinical experience, those who needed clinical intervention for breathing issues was in fact under 20 % and not the 90-95% as intimated by the CEO of the SPCA and used as the basis of Trade Me's policy decision. Further the only national Board certified small animal reproductive specialist for research who deals with many brachycephalic dogs was not contacted at all to comment on these statistics or their applicability in New Zealand. Rather research is quoted which does not reflect the New Zealand British and French Bulldogs. It is in our view flawed and has been sensationalized to unfairly target responsible breeders and the many good and proud owners of these breeds who have been told erroneously that they are abusing their dogs by simply owning them.

This is not to say there are not health issues in these or any dog breeds. However responsible breeders are not the villains. They are working hard to improve the overall health of their dogs and to ensure that those dogs live healthy happy lives with their owners. It seems that what Trademe and the SPCA have not cared to consider, is that much has already been done to improve the health of British bulldogs and French Bulldogs and for those who know the breeds in New Zealand it has been clear for many years that dogs bred by responsible breeders are now healthier than they have ever been. Had they asked the clubs or the specialist vets this they would have received that feedback. And this work by breeders will not stop. It will continue as responsible breeders, Clubs and DogsNZ work hard to make further improvements in welfare, health and education.

We are of the view that education not regulation, is essential. In saying that there are currently no regulations to deal with those irresponsible breeders who have bred indiscriminately. However, this does not warrant the extreme position taken by both Trade Me and the SPCA which will sadly we believe have consequences for the welfare of dogs bred by irresponsible breeders. We agree with Dogs NZ that the best way to ensure good welfare standards for these breeds, which people will continue to want to buy, is to support and encourage those who are breeding them responsibly. Dogs NZ, which is the organization responsible for the issue of pedigree certificates and all registrations of pedigree dogs, has a strict mandatory Breeders Code of Ethics, a Brachycephalic Working Group, and a Canine Welfare Committee, all of which are in place to ensure the improving welfare standards of breeding dogs and their puppies. The Bulldog Club Taskforce will work with DogsNZ as we continue to advocate and educate on behalf of our breeds.

Finally, as stated the Bulldog Club Taskforce is concerned that the banning of sale of these three breeds in its entirety will drive sales to other unregulated websites where poor welfare in breeding dogs and puppies will continue to be experienced. Trade Me has a significant platform which could have been used for education for the inevitable ongoing breeding of these dogs and we believe that if Trade Me exclude some breeds, they should exclude all animal sales. Their decision has in our view not been well thought through and is based on flawed research, if any.

The Auckland Bulldog Club
The Central Bulldog Club
The Wellington Bulldog Club
The Southern Bulldog Club
The French Bulldog Society