

## Open letter to the Kennel Club



Dear Crufts Team at The Kennel Club,

Like you, the RSPCA is dedicated to protecting and promoting the welfare of all dogs. With Crufts taking place in March, I wanted to write to you to urge you not to show the most prolific brachycephalic breeds - pugs and British and French bulldogs - at Crufts.

We know that the world-famous show is enjoyed by many, uniting dog lovers globally. Crufts should be a celebration of the dogs that you and we hold dear yet sadly, it continues to promote extreme physical features and worrying breeding practices, compromising the welfare of these animals.

Since 2008, the RSPCA has proposed to you a series of very reasonable actions, including mandatory health screening and outcrossing, that could protect future generations of brachycephalic dogs from suffering. Action on these points, and others, has been too slow and not treated with necessary urgency. It is because of this, that we now believe it is time for Crufts to stop normalising the practice of selective breeding for extreme features and the suggestion that dogs like this are happy and healthy. These practices can be detrimental to dog welfare and Crufts should not show pugs, British bulldogs, and French bulldogs.

And the British public agree. In a poll conducted by Savanta and the RSPCA, 78% of people agree that brachycephalic animals should receive mandatory health testing in order to be bred and to compete at Crufts, rising to 82% of those respondents who are familiar with Crufts. Almost three in five 3 in 5 (58%) think that breeds such as British bulldogs, French bulldogs and pugs should not be allowed to compete at Crufts.

Shockingly, some brachycephalic breeds have a significantly shorter lifespan than others. A 2022 study in *Scientific Reports* revealed that French bulldogs have the shortest estimated life expectancy of a heartbreaking 4.5 years.

By taking a stand now, Crufts and The Kennel Club have an opportunity to use the show's undeniable influence and reach to help change breeding standards rather than endorse the extreme conformations often seen on these dogs.

Brachycephaly is already at a crisis point, compromising dog welfare. As you are aware, brachycephalic dogs are at much greater risk of various debilitating and distressing health conditions, including Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS). Many of these dogs have airways that are obstructed and abnormally narrow nostrils and windpipes. This means that they experience a constant struggle to breathe normally. But it is not just breathing problems that affect these dogs. Due to their extreme body shape, these beloved family pets often suffer from lifelong diseases, chronic skin conditions, spinal deformities, dental issues and painful eye problems that shorten their life-expectancy and are expensive and extremely distressing for pets and their owners.

The Kennel Club is trusted and respected by the public. You have the power to make a difference for them and for countless dogs. We urge you to act now to help protect future generations. We love these dogs - and hope you love them enough to let them breathe.

Yours sincerely,