

Abstract - Packer

Ethics versus aesthetics: Ethical challenges of human interactions with brachycephalic dogs

Brachycephalic dogs have dramatically increased in popularity over the past decade. Their paradoxical rise is despite the burgeoning veterinary literature documenting the range of common and severe disorders they are affected by, and public education campaigns attempting to reduce their acquisition. This conflict has instigated several legal cases internationally, challenging the legality of breeding, showing and/or owning brachycephalic dogs.

This session will explore the ethics of human interactions with brachycephalic dogs, from multiple stakeholder perspectives including breeders, owners, veterinarians and animal rescue organisations.

Exploring the supply of these challenging breeds, we will consider the ethics of breeding brachycephalics, reflecting on contemporary strategies to improve breed health, including disorder screening, changing breed standards and outcrossing, and their efficacy in protecting canine welfare. Exploring the demand for brachycephalic dogs, we will consider the ethics of owning a brachycephalic dog, reflecting on anthropocentric motivations for their acquisition, and the ethics of acquisition source, including purchasing from breeders and adopting from rescue organizations.

Finally, as veterinarians play a key role in maintaining and improving the health of current brachycephalic dogs, we will consider the ethics of treating brachycephalic-related disorders, including conformation-altering surgery, and reproductive interventions including elective and emergency caesarean sections and assisted reproduction.

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