What is a brachycephalic dog?
Dogs with a flat, wide shaped head are said to be brachycephalic (brachy, meaning short and cephalic, meaning head). This particular skull shape will often give these dogs a characteristic flattened face and a short muzzle. Muzzle length may vary, even amongst a particular breed, with some dogs having shorter muzzles than others.

Which breeds are brachycephalic?
Popular brachycephalic breeds include, amongst others; French Bulldogs, Pugs, Bulldogs, Boston Terriers, Shih Tzus and Pekingese.

Some brachycephalic dogs may be at higher risk of certain health conditions. Find out more inside.
CAN HEAD SHAPE IMPACT HEALTH?

Although the shape of the head can make these dogs look very appealing, dogs with a very flat face and short muzzle may have a higher risk of developing certain health issues associated with these features.

If you suspect your dog may have any of the following health problems, then you should seek veterinary advice.

BREATHING DIFFICULTIES

The soft tissue in the nose and throat of some brachycephalic dogs may be excessive for the airways, making it difficult for them to breathe normally (causing heavy panting or noisy breathing). Some dogs may also have narrow nostrils making it even more difficult to breathe.

SKIN PROBLEMS

Some brachycephalic dogs may have an excess of skin, which creates folds, especially around the front of the face. These folds can make a warm, moist environment which is perfect for bacteria and yeast to grow, possibly leading to infection and severe itching.

DENTAL PROBLEMS

Dogs with a shortened skull will often have a shortened jaw, but the number and size of teeth will stay the same. This can mean that the teeth become overcrowded and can cause dental and gum problems.

EYE CONDITIONS

Some brachycephalic dogs may have shallow eye sockets, causing their eyes to become more prominent and at a higher risk of trauma, ulcers and increasing the chance of them becoming dry and painful (due to not being able to blink properly).
A NEW HOLISTIC APPROACH

Last year the Kennel Club began the initial research phase of a dynamic new resource to support Breed Clubs and individual breeders - the Breed Health and Conservation Plans (BHCP) project. This new resource will use evidence-based research to identify, understand and prioritise each breed's health issues. Each breed's BHCP report will be the foundation by which canine health can be improved.

WHAT IS THE KENNEL CLUB DOING TO IMPROVE THE FUTURE HEALTH OF BRACHYCEPHALIC BREEDS?

COLLABORATING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

A Brachycephalic Breeds Working Group was set up in 2016, led by the Kennel Club and working alongside veterinary associations, researchers and dog welfare organisations.

FUNDING IMPORTANT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

The Kennel Club Charitable Trust is funding ground breaking research into Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS) at Cambridge University. The aim is to improve the health of dogs which are already affected by BOAS and to create breeding tools which will help breeders make informed choices and ultimately breed healthier puppies.

ADVISING BREEDERS

The Kennel Club dedicates a whole section of its website to providing information and advice on how to breed away from conformation related health problems, to help breeders who are seeking guidance to find out on how to breed healthy, happy dogs.

IMPRESSING DOG SHOW JUDGES EDUCATION

The Kennel Club raises awareness of brachycephalic health amongst dog show judges and emphasises the responsibility of judges through education training days, and an online resource known as Breed Watch, which helps judges monitor and address visible health concerns.

The Kennel Club has recently launched a new FREE Academy resource, including a film, on brachycephalic breed health and research. The resource is now available at www.kcacademy.org.uk

For more on what the Kennel Club does for dog health, visit www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health
WHAT ARE BREED CLUBS DOING FOR THE HEALTH OF BRACHYCEPHALIC BREEDS?

Breed clubs are actively engaged in improving and maintaining the health of their breed, with significant efforts being made to help understand and strengthen the health of brachycephalic breeds. Many breed clubs are proactive and have created their own health schemes, or are closely collaborating with vets and researchers. Contact your local breed club to see what is being done to improve canine health.

Contact details can be found at www.breedinformationcentre.org.uk.

THINKING OF BUYING A PUPPY OF A BRACHYCEPHALIC BREED?

Not all brachycephalic dogs will have the health issues described overleaf, but it is important that if you are thinking of buying a puppy, that you:

• Contact your local breed club for more information on the breed you’re considering.
• Buy from a responsible breeder, such as a Kennel Club Assured Breeder (www.assuredbreedersscheme.org.uk)
• Make sure you ask the breeder about the health of the parents and ask to see any certificates for any health screening tests that the parents may have had.
• Make sure you see mum (and dad if possible) to decide if they look and sound healthy.

For more information, please email the Kennel Club health team on mateselect@thekennelclub.org.uk or visit www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health