admin@wsava.org
72 Melville Street
Dundas, Ontario
Canada, L9H2A1

PRESS RELEASE

WSAVA Calls for 'Health-focused' Breeding

The World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) shares the concerns recently expressed by the Norwegian court regarding the breeding of English Bulldogs and Cavalier King Charles Spaniels. It confirms its support for the efforts of Animal Protection Norway and the Norwegian Animal Welfare Act, which states that: 'Breeding should promote traits that provide robust animals with good function and health.'

In a new Position Paper, WSAVA has called for a much greater focus on health screening of breeding animals and educating the public. This should include encouraging them to ask breeders for veterinary documentation of pre-breeding health screening results on the parents of puppies and kittens before they buy them. It urges that the selection of breeding dogs and cats should avoid extreme conformation that predisposes to disease and poor welfare.

The WSAVA's response to the Court ruling has been led by its Hereditary Disease Committee (HDC), whose members include world-leading veterinary geneticists, with the support of the WSAVA's Animal Wellness and Welfare Committee (AWWC).

The Chair of the HDC, Dr Jerold Bell DVM, a practicing veterinarian and Adjunct Professor of Genetics at the Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, Massachusetts, USA, explains: "We recognize the serious welfare issues that exist in relation to brachycephaly, as well as other extreme anatomy and hereditary diseases in dogs and all purposefully-bred animals. We believe that health-focused breeding and husbandry practices are the means to improve the health and welfare of these animals. This is effectively 'health quality control.'

"The public's affection for these popular breeds demands a greater focus on education around healthy breeding and welfare because altered public demand will encourage the

breeding practices that produce healthier pets and, over time, create real change."

Dr Bell added: "The WSAVA HDC and AWWC are already working on a number of educational initiatives for rollout later this year and we are keen to engage with other veterinary stakeholders on this issue to increase momentum and the pace of change."

The new Position Paper supports an earlier WSAVA Position Paper, calling on veterinarians and breeders to ensure that criteria used for the selection of breeding animals include the ability to reproduce naturally and exclude anatomical characteristics that predispose to hereditary disease and poor welfare. This Paper also urges breeders to utilize pre-breeding health screening to select animals that are likely to produce healthy offspring.

The WSAVA:

- Prioritizes the breeding of animals that focuses on their health and welfare
- Supports Animal Welfare Laws that reduce the suffering of animals and enhance their good welfare
- Encourages kennel clubs and cat registries to adjust breed standards to address and avoid extreme conformation and disease predisposing anatomy
- Encourages kennel clubs and cat registries to establish breeding guidelines that include breed-specific pre-breeding health screening to avoid genetic diseases, disease risk from exaggerated anatomical features, and monitoring of breed health
- Encourages breeders to work with the veterinary profession to perform pre-breeding health examinations, to select healthy breeding dogs and cats, and to provide pet buyers with official documentation of health screening
- Encourages future pet owners to consult with a veterinarian before buying a purposely bred dog or cat, to assess their health and the health of their parents.

Note to editors:

The WSAVA represents more than 200,000 veterinarians worldwide through its 115 member associations and works to enhance standards of clinical care for companion animals. Its core activities include the development of WSAVA Global Guidelines in key areas of veterinary practice, including pain management, nutrition and vaccination, together with lobbying on important issues affecting companion animal care worldwide.

For further information, please contact:

Rebecca George, George PR, Tel: 01449 737281/07974 161108/ email: rebecca@georgepr.com