



# BVA policy position on extreme conformation – Executive Summary

## Introduction

Extremes of conformation in animals can be defined as when an animal's body shape, structure or appearance has the potential to result in negative impacts on their health and welfare (see crossspecies examples at Appendix 1). Breeding decisions across companion and production animals should be taken with the aim of conferring healthy or healthier conformational traits, being mindful of the potential health and welfare impact of selection for specific or desirable structural features.

Society as a whole, including the veterinary professions, owners and keepers, breeders, registering bodies, breed clubs and societies, academics, animal charities and those with a commercial interest in the use of animals and their images, have a social and moral responsibility to work together towards:

- ensuring healthier future generations of animals that currently experience extreme conformation

- reducing the negative health and welfare impacts of extreme conformation.

- increasing awareness of the health and welfare issues associated with extreme conformation across different species.

- encouraging research in order to better understand and address the prevalence of, and trends in, conformation-related ill-health.

- encouraging research in order to better understand and address the prevalence of the welfare impacts resulting from extreme conformation.

- the development of objective, robust measures to contribute to the assessment of problematic conformation.

BVA does however recognise that it may be necessary to select animals with specific conformational traits for scientific purposes in line with the [Animals \(Scientific Procedures\) Act 1986](#).

## Recommendations

Below BVA sets out 10 key recommendations for stakeholders across animal health and welfare, including the veterinary professions, registering bodies, breeders, owners and keepers and marketers and advertisers to ensure healthier future generations of animals. Our specific recommendations are:

**Recommendation 1: BVA encourages all veterinary surgeons to participate in reporting schemes regarding surgery to correct health and welfare problems relating to conformation where these exist.**

**Recommendation 2: BVA encourages veterinary surgeons to advise keepers not to breed from companion or production animals that have required a caesarean section due to birthing difficulties that are a result of extreme conformation.**

**Recommendation 3: In companion animals, neutering should be encouraged as a means of preventing the perpetuation of extremes of conformation.**

