

# Letter to companies who use brachycephalic cats and other breeds with extreme conformation

Dear Sir or Madam,

International Cat Care's veterinary division, the International Society of Feline Medicine (ISFM), is working with the Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations (FECAVA), the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) and the Union of European Veterinary Practitioners (UEVP) to improve the welfare of all animals.

In the last few years, we have been looking into the responsible breeding of cats. Some popular breeds have extreme body shapes like flat faces, short legs, folded ears or skin changes, which can all cause health problems.

Most affected are the flat-faced cats, so called brachycephalic breeds, such as Persian cats, as well as Scottish Folds, which have a mutation to the cartilage causing their folded ears.

In your adverts, we found that your company is using images of these cats to make your product attractive to your customer – even if the product is not pet-related. Both brachycephalic cats and Scottish Folds have become very popular in the last few years, influenced by adverts like yours and celebrities who are in the spotlight with their pet every day. The continued use of photos and videos of these breeds encourages potential owners to choose them as pets.

With their nice round head, beautiful round eyes or folded ears, these cats make people think of them as small children and babies. But in fact, these breeds are 'created' by humans to a certain level of extreme conformation, which hugely compromises their overall health and quality of life.

Narrow nostrils, an overly long soft palate, bulging eyes or folded ears are visible abnormalities on the outside. Deformation of the cartilage leading to severe osteoarthritis, difficulty breathing, and chronic eye and skin infections are problems that people don't see from the outside but have a negative impact on the health of these animals.

Our fundamental aim as veterinarians is to protect animal welfare and discourage the breeding of animals that experience extreme suffering and pain. It is our ethical duty as veterinarians to contribute all of our expertise and skills to the wellbeing and health of all animals and to promote and protect their welfare. Therefore, we pledge not to use these breeds in any advertising.

We kindly ask you to consider these remarks carefully and join our pledge not to use these breeds in advertising in future. In the meantime, our profession will uphold its responsibility and make further efforts to change breeding standards and, if necessary, stop the breeding of certain breeds as well as other forms of extreme conformation.

In the end, we all want animals to be happy and healthy, and so do your customers.

ISFM with FVE, FECAVA & UEVP

