

Veterinary Ireland Media Release 26th June 2018

Movie Fans Urged – Don't Fall in Love with “Patrick the Pug”

Irish vets are encouraging movie fans not to 'fall in love' with “Patrick the Pug”. Walt Disney Motion Pictures (Buena Vista International) will release the new movie this summer. Its main character, Sarah Francis (played by Beattie Edmondson) inherits a very spoilt dog – Patrick - a pug. The dog is described as one who 'dribbles and snores' but of course his 'stubby, stumpy attitude' turns Sarah's life around.

Unfortunately, the characteristics that make pugs more entertaining and appealing to the general public, are responsible for many of the serious and life-restricting health problems these breeds experience. The short skull shape, short muzzle and flat nose means that these dogs can suffer from Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS).

Vets worldwide have big concerns about responsible breeding of flat-faced (Brachycephalic) dogs. The numbers of these dogs and interventions required by vets to treat the health problems in Pugs have exploded in recent years.

Vets are concerned that the new movie could enhance the view that pugs and flat faced dogs like bulldogs are 'cute', which they undoubtedly are, without also highlighting the associated health problems that the vast majority of these brachycephalic breeds suffer from.

Struggling to breathe, affected dogs can spend their life feeling like they are breathing through a pillow, which is the cause of their snoring sounds. Many of these dogs require surgical interventions on an almost routine basis.

These issues are not something any dog lover should want for their pet.

ACTION POINTS AGREED WITH DISNEY

Veterinary Ireland has collaborated with FECAVA (the Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations), the BVA (British Veterinary Association) and its Brachycephalic Working Group in the UK to agree the following Action Points with Disney Studios to promote responsible breeding of flat-faced dogs:

1. Adding a welfare message into the credits section of the film that explains the health issues of Pugs.
2. Leaflets to be distributed to journalists and to the public at Irish cinemas that describe the leading health issues of the Pug breed and suggest that ownership should not be undertaken lightly.
3. Images of Pugs dressed in human clothing will *not* be used in leading marketing materials, such as the *Patrick* promotional poster.
4. The film will *not* be accompanied by any merchandising of *Patrick* the Pug memorabilia.
5. Veterinary Ireland will support the development of any film industry initiatives to ensure that potential animal welfare implications are considered prior to future movies that prominently feature animals.

Veterinary Ireland says that indiscriminately breeding brachycephalic dogs in order to meet popular demand is causing more pain and discomfort and is not in the best interests of animal welfare. They want to reverse the current trend of breeding more and more extreme brachycephalic dogs.

Irish Vets want to help to ensure that by 2030, all flat-faced dogs born in Ireland, can breathe with ease. Last November (2017), Veterinary Ireland members ratified a Policy Document on Brachycephalic Dogs and passed a motion at its AGM in relation to Brachycephalic Dogs, calling on the media to support the cessation of the use of flat-faced dog and cat breeds in all forms of advertising.

Unfortunately, owners are often unaware of the potential suffering these dogs may go through. Research in the UK revealed that 60% of people who owned a dog with Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS), did not recognise their pet dogs' clinical signs as a problem (Packer et al., 2015).

ENDS



PHOTOGRAPHS



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Vets from Veterinary Ireland demonstrate with a mask the discomfort experienced by flat faced dogs like pugs every day when they are trying to breath – pictured are vets Fiona MacDermott; John O'Connor; Gerry Neary (President, Veterinary Ireland) and Danny Holmes representing the Veterinary Ireland Companion Animal Society, who is also a Board member of FECAVA (the Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations). Picture by Dylan Vaughan.



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EDITORIAL FOOTNOTE:

You can also find more detail here on the veterinary concerns about pugs and flat faced dogs:
http://www.veterinaryireland.ie/images/vi_press_release_19thmay.pdf

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