Welfare issues associated with the breeding of dogs & cats in the EU

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About Eurogroup

- The primary federation representing animal welfare organisations across the EU
Key issues

• Commercial breeding
• Selective breeding
Commercial breeding
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- Breeders in the EU can range from hobby breeders to large scale breeding establishments
- Welfare issues can occur regardless of scale, at every step of the chain
Commercial breeding

Research on dog breeding:

• Commercial breeding establishments can produce physically & behaviourally unsound puppies (Lockwood, 1995)

• Non-domestic breeding environments can be associated with behaviour problems later in life (Appleby et al., 2002)

• Breeding dogs from commercial breeding establishments can have higher rates of health & behaviour problems compared to pet dogs (McMillan et al., 2011)
Selective breeding
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Welfare issues can be split into:

• Exaggerated conformations
• Inherited disorders

Photo: arash_rk
Exaggerated features

• Many dog and cat breeds have been bred to emphasise physical features
  
• E.g. Short, flat faces, bulging or sunken eyes & wrinkled skin
  
• Some features so extreme they can cause pain & suffering
Exaggerated features

• Some features are so extreme they can cause pain and suffering, make animals prone to particular disorders or prevent them from behaving normally.

Photo: Poi Photography
Inherited disorders

- Rules of dog and cat showing mean that different breeds have been bred separately for many years
- One of the effects = lack of genetic diversity = increased risk of inherited disorders
- Research has shown that every breed of dog that is well studied is prone to a range of diseases
Inherited disorders

- Examples include cancer, blindness and epilepsy
- Some inherited disorders may cause only minor suffering. Others can be extremely painful and last for a large part of an animal’s life.
For more info…

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