



Press Information

WSAVA Calls for ‘Health-conscious’ Breeding and Greater Use of Genetic Testing

The [World Small Animal Veterinary Association](#) has called on veterinarians and breeders to reduce the suffering caused by hereditary disease in companion animals by adopting a ‘health-conscious’ approach to breeding and by making full use of advances in genetic testing and counselling. In a new [Position Paper](#), it calls 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, such as extreme conformations including size, skin folds, angulation and extremely short faces (brachycephaly). It also urges breeders to utilize pre-breeding health screening to select animals that are likely to produce healthy offspring.

With advances in technology increasing the range and accuracy of genetic tests, the Paper also urges veterinarians to ensure they are up to date with the availability and proper use of genetic tests and calls for individual tests to be validated for the specific disease and the breed being tested. It further recommends that genetic counselling should be tailored to the individual animal and its circumstances, including the mode of inheritance, the penetrance of the mutation being tested for, the breed being tested and the frequency of the mutation within that breed.

The Position Paper, prepared by the [WSAVA's Hereditary Disease Committee](#), is a response to the continuing increase in popularity of companion animals with exaggerated traits or genetic disorders, many of which suffer severe health and welfare issues. The WSAVA has already endorsed a [Position Paper](#) launched in June 2018 by the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe and the Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations calling for health and welfare to be given priority over appearance.

In launching its own Position Paper, the WSAVA, which represents more than 200,000 companion animal veterinarians globally, aims to shine a spotlight on the issue around the world and to highlight the benefits that advances in DNA testing can offer to veterinarians and breeders in reducing the suffering caused by extreme breeding. Dr Jerold Bell DVM, a practicing veterinarian and Adjunct Professor of Genetics at the Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, Massachusetts, USA, was elected as Chair of the WSAVA's Hereditary Disease Committee in September 2018 and co-authored the Paper.

The WSAVA Hereditary Disease Committee sponsors the [Canine and Feline Hereditary Disease \(DNA\) Testing Laboratories database](#), which is searchable by breed, disease, and testing laboratory. The Committee is working to develop educational resources and tools for veterinarians and breeders. Its work is generously supported by Waltham®.

The WSAVA works to enhance the clinical care of companion animals globally, representing more than 200,00 veterinarians around the world through 110 member associations. Its core activities include the creation of Global Guidelines which set standards for veterinary care and providing continuing education (CE) and other educational resources for its members, particularly those in which companion animal veterinary care is still emerging.

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