

New Study Proves These Dogs Live a Life of Torture, Even in a Loving Home

Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, they discover another painful outcome for this tragic breed. It's enough to make you cringe. If you want this breed, please either rescue one, or at least avoid these cruel breeders like the plague.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Researchers have uncovered yet another health problem with Pugs: difficulty walking
- Study shows that almost a third of Swedish Pugs have gait abnormalities that are neurological in nature
- Deliberate poor breeding practices have devastated the health of Pugs, other brachycephalic dogs and several other breeds
- Veterinarians in the U.K., the U.S. and Canada are very concerned about the health problems resulting from irresponsible breeding to exaggerate physical traits
- Prospective dog parents who plan to shop versus adopt should be very careful to deal only with responsible breeders who practice reparative conformation breeding

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published May 25, 2018.

As if bad breeding wasn't causing enough debilitating health problems for purebred Pugs (and many other breeds), a new study by Swedish researchers reveals yet another inherited issue in these poor dogs: gait problems. The study, published in the journal Vet Record, shows that 1 in 3 Pugs may suffer from walking problems.¹

Study Shows Almost a Third of Pugs Suffer Gait Abnormalities

A team of university researchers set out to analyze gait abnormalities in 550 Pugs registered with the Swedish Kennel Club. All the dogs were 1, 5 or 8 years old.

The dogs' owners filled out a questionnaire about their pet's gait. If they noted gait abnormalities, they were asked if their dogs showed signs of lameness, ataxia (lack of coordination), weakness, inability to jump, or whether the nails or skin on the paws were worn down. The owners were also asked to submit videos of their dogs walking, if possible.

Based on the owners' input, the researchers concluded that of the 550 Pugs evaluated, 30.7% (about 169 dogs) had some degree of difficulty walking. The dog owners reported that the most common indicator their dog was in pain from a gait abnormality was reluctance to go for a walk.

The research team also learned that difficulty walking was more common in older Pugs, and in addition, there's an association between an unusual gait and the breathing difficulties flat-faced dogs suffer as a result of brachycephalic respiratory syndrome. And while gait abnormalities were primarily seen in older Pugs, the researchers believe the issue is neurological rather than age-related:

“Although this study did not aim to differentiate orthopaedic from neurological causes for gait abnormalities, the high prevalence of wearing nails reported in the questionnaires, and the fact that lameness was not a common finding in submitted videos, suggest that the majority of gait abnormalities in the pugs were indeed related to neurological rather than orthopaedic disorders.”²

How Humans Have Destroyed the Health of Pugs

Over the last century, the Pug has been deliberately bred (and inbred) to exaggerate his pushed-in face, with no regard for the health and quality of life consequences for these dogs. The image below on the left is from a 1915 book titled “Dogs of All Nations.” The picture on the right is today's poorly bred version of the Pug on the left.



By: [Science and Dogs](#)

The result is a breed that suffers from a long list of devastating health problems, including:

- Breathing difficulties
- High blood pressure
- Heart problems
- Dental issues
- Low blood oxygen levels
- Skin fold dermatitis
- A tendency to overheat/develop **heatstroke**
- A “highly desirable” double-curl tail that can result in paralysis

And now we can add neurological gait abnormalities to the list. It's absolutely infuriating to know that humans are deliberately creating dogs with such horrible health problems.

Flat-Faced Breeds Are Hugely Popular in the UK

Sean Wensley, president of the British Veterinary Association (BVA), which has over the last few years begin urging people to stop buying flat-faced dogs, specifically Pugs, French Bulldogs and **English Bulldogs**, accurately points out that the suffering of these dogs is man-made.

*"We are deliberately breeding dogs for physical characteristics that we as humans find appealing, like a flat-face," says Wensley. "But importantly, that means they are preventable problems because if we could breed for healthier shapes instead, then we are going to have, in turn, healthy, happy dogs that enjoy a good quality of life, which we feel strongly ought to be the case."*³

Wensley believes U.K. veterinarians have a duty not only to treat the dogs dealing with breed-related health problems, but also to raise awareness with the public that as a society, we are creating entirely preventable suffering in these animals.

"We would actually strongly dissuade and discourage prospective dog owners from taking on this breed to help improve animal welfare," he says, "and I suppose also importantly to avoid some of the veterinary costs that go with treating these conditions."

Veterinarians in the US and Canada Also Have Breed Health Concerns

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) publicly opposes selective breeding for physical characteristics that can cause health problems in pets.⁴ Breeds the CVMA has identified as being of concern include:

- Doberman Pinschers and Boxers for heart disease
- Dachshunds, Corgis and Basset Hounds for back problems
- German Shepherds for their uneven gait
- Bulldogs for their wide heads

In 2017 the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) approved a new policy on the responsible breeding of companion animals. From the AVMA news release:

“Inherited Disorders in Responsible Breeding of Companion Animals

To maximize the health and welfare of companion animals, the AVMA supports research in genetic and inherited disorders to better educate the profession and breeders on identifying and minimizing inherited disorders in companion animal breeding programs.

*To assist with this, the AVMA encourages veterinarians to pursue continuing education in the emerging area of genetic disease in companion animals. The AVMA also encourages veterinarians to educate breeders, companion animal owners and the public on the responsibilities involved with breeding and selecting companion animals.”*⁵

The intent of the new policy, which addresses responsible breeding for all companion animals, not simply dogs and cats, is to support responsible breeding practices that reduce or eliminate the health and welfare concerns associated with inherited conditions, not to condemn or stigmatize specific breeds.

Please Don't Be Part of the Problem — Be Part of the Solution Instead

The only way out of this is to stop breeding unhealthy animals. For this to happen, we need to commit to one of two choices: rescuing animals already in the gene pool and never, ever supporting bad breeders. This means committing to not buying puppies from pet stores or any breeder that isn't making amazing, transparent efforts to clearly improve their breed.

If you're going to shop and not adopt, the only responsible option is to partner with a breeder you know and trust explicitly. This means calling a dozen references, reviewing medical records, looking at genetic testing scores. Good breeders practice "reparative conformation" breeding, which means they have proactively done all DNA testing possible (and show you the results) and are intentionally breeding genetic flaws out of their animals.

Neither pet store nor puppy mill owners are the least bit concerned with genetic testing (which means when you ask for genetic testing results there won't be any), and are a leading cause of the perpetuation of some of the horrific diseases we see in today's purebred dogs.

“No dog breed has ever been improved by the capricious and arbitrary decision that a shorter or longer or flatter or bigger or smaller or curlier ‘whatever’ is better. Condemning a dog to a lifetime of suffering for the sake of looks is not an improvement; it is torture.” – Caen Elegans, Science and Dogs blog

Sources and References

[Independent February 6, 2018](#)
^{1, 2} [Vet Record, Volume 182, Issue 6 \(Archived\)](#)
^{3, 4} [CBC Radio, September 21, 2016](#)
⁵ [AVMA@Work, January 14, 2017 \(Archived\)](#)
