



International Guidelines on the Use of Imagery of Dogs with Extreme Conformations in Advertising

International Collaborative on Extreme Conformations in Dogs (ICECDogs)

<https://www.icecdogs.com/>

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Summary

Although extreme conformation (extreme body appearance) is responsible for considerable unnecessary suffering in dogs, public acceptance and normalisation of unnatural conformations sadly remains common. The use of images of dogs with extreme body appearance for marketing, promotional or entertainment purposes is considered a major contributor to widespread public acceptance of, and high demand for, dogs with extreme body features. The serious health and welfare problems in dogs related to extreme conformation are now recognised as a leading canine welfare priority globally.

Consequently, the *International Collaborative on Extreme Conformations in Dogs (ICECDogs)* now calls on all organisations worldwide to **avoid the use of images of dogs with extreme conformations in all forms of public communications that are not directly aimed at protecting the health and welfare of dogs and to instead focus on using images that promote physically healthy conformations in dogs.**

What is an extreme conformation?

ICECDogs defines extreme conformation in dogs as:

A physical appearance that has been so significantly altered through selection by humankind away from the ancestral natural canine appearance that affected dogs commonly suffer from poor health and welfare, with negative impacts on their quality and quantity of life.

Who are these guidelines for?

- Anyone who uses images of dogs in any form of communications material. This includes advertising and creative agencies, media and film companies, designers, social media influencers and other publishers¹ (for example, greeting card manufacturers) or organisations that contract out design of their public communications.

Why have these guidelines?

¹ The term *publishers* is used throughout these guidelines to refer to anyone who uses or is considering using animal imagery in any form of public communications.



- Demand for certain types of dog with extreme conformation can be promoted inadvertently by imagery used in the media. It is important that publishers are aware of their ethical and welfare responsibilities as influencers in shaping public perceptions on what is 'normal'. Publishers should understand that imagery they share can drive public demand for different types of dogs.
- Images of dogs with extreme conformations are often actively selected for promotional materials to elicit "cute", "adorable" or even shock reactions from the public. However, using these extreme images can drive demand for dogs with unhealthy body shapes, with potential harm to animal welfare.
- It is critical to reduce habitual public exposure to images of dogs with extreme conformations to avoid normalising extreme conformations in dogs. Whilst not every dog with extreme conformation is destined for a life of suffering, and some implicated breeds do have examples of some dogs that are minimally afflicted by extreme conformation, the general public often struggle to distinguish between what constitutes an extreme versus an acceptable conformation within a breed. Consequently, at the current time, the safest option for publishers is to avoid using images of any breeds recognised to have a high proportion of animals with extreme conformations. Over time, as these breeds move away from extreme conformation, then these advertising restrictions can be relaxed.

What should publishers do?

- Publishers should avoid using images of dogs with extreme conformation (unless the image is used to explicitly underscore the harms linked to extreme conformations or to otherwise promote canine health and welfare).
- A list is provided below of some extreme conformations (extreme body shapes) that should be avoided for any type of marketing/publishing.
- Publishers should share and explain these ICECDogs guidelines with their partners and stakeholders to promote wider awareness of the important role of the media in protecting animal welfare.

Images of dogs that should not be published:

- Extreme conformations in dogs:
 - **Flat-faces (brachycephaly)** commonly lead to health issues including difficulty breathing and eye ulcers.
 - **Clearly overshot or undershot jaw** can affect ability to eat and promote dental disease.
 - **Large and protruding eyes** pose increased risk of eye damage and infection.
 - **Shortened twisted legs (chondrodysplasia)**. Affected dogs with excessively short legs and a disproportionately long body frequently suffer spinal and neurological problems.
 - **Facial and body skin folds** commonly lead to skin infections and pain.
 - **Bulging or domed skull** is associated with brain diseases such as hydrocephalus and brain herniation.



- **Eyelids turned-in (entropion: eyelashes or hair rubbing on cornea) or turned-out (ectropion: drooping eyelids so the front of the eye is not cleaned with each blink)** commonly lead to lifelong painful eye problems such as infections and corneal ulcers.
- **Tailessness or deformed twisted at birth.** Affected dogs communicate less effectively with other dogs.
- **Disproportionately broad head and shoulders** when combined with a narrow pelvis often results in inability to deliver puppies without surgical intervention.
- **A sloped back with excessively low rear end and excessively flexed hind legs** are commonly associated with locomotion problems.

General advice:

When in doubt as to whether a particular image of a dog shows an extreme conformation, publishers are advised to err on the side of welfare caution and **not use the image.**

With ready access to images of hundreds of dog breeds and types that do not show extreme conformation, there is no longer any animal welfare justification for inappropriate sharing of images of dogs with extreme conformation.