Extreme breeding – the facts

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What is a dog?

» Man’s best friend 😊
» Domesticated through the times
» Not a wolf
» Not (necessarily) supposed to look like wolves
» Different types of dogs – original work
» We still need dog breeds to be able to predict behaviour/function for the right choice of dog for each family/owner
» Great variation – anatomy and behaviour
» BUT! Physiological and functional limits
» The exact limitations remain to be defined – research needed!

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Breeding – how does it work?

» Dog breeding in private homes
» Mostly a hobby (in many countries)
» Breeding animals are house pets
» Few litters (on average) per breeder
» Need for continuity in breeding strategy and plan
» Breed clubs are essential
» Breed specific strategies mandatory for all breeds in Norway – good breeding tool

» Increasing trend:
  – Puppy farms, import of pet dogs (legal/illega from puppy farms)
  – Breeding outside kennel club system
  – Kennel clubs cannot reach or influence these
Kennel clubs

» Breeding according to a written *breed standard*

» Not all can be written in the standard – *traditions and interpretations are very important*

» General goal:
  – functional anatomy
  – homogeneity within the breed

» Shows

» Working trials

» Health and mentality testing

» Selection/improvement ↔ genetic variation
Extreme breeding

» Great variation in anatomy and behaviour between breeds—originating from ancient work task
» Formation of today’s breeds – originally breeding close relatives and those looking very alike
» Closing of stud books – no further «genetic input»
» Dramatic reduction in genetic variation within breed
» All dogs within the same breed supposed to look alike

» Through time:
  – Short legs shorter
  – Heavy body heavier
  – Long coat longer
  – Loose skin looser
  – Long ears longer
  – Wrinkles… etc
Dog – the species

Type

Type

Type

Type
Impact on health and welfare

» There are physiological and functional limits for extreme anatomical traits
» When limit is reached, the result is threatened function, welfare and health

» Breed standards are reviewed through the last decades
» A lot of descriptions more moderate than before
» Still need for thorough revision

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Breed Specific Instructions (BSI) – regarding exaggerations in pedigree dogs

» Program for use in the showring

» Applies to all Nordic countries (other countries have similar systems)

» A tool to ensure that show winners have functional anatomy

» Also important to increase awareness among
  – Show judges
  – Show judge students
  – Breeders
  – Owners
  – The public

» Education of all stakeholders about sound function and healthy anatomy is extremely important
All breeds are listed per FCI group – the ones with specific instructions are in bold.

Breed specific texts describing traits that need specific attention.
Summary

» Little genetic variation within breeds
» Great variation across the dog species!
» Dogs are not all supposed to look like wolves
» Kennel clubs/breed clubs work for health and welfare
» Information to all stakeholders of extreme importance
» There are functional limitations for extreme anatomy
» Research is needed to define these limitations

Thank you!

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