In the dilemma discussed in the January issue of In Practice, a colleague had been interviewed on local radio to discuss the health problems associated with brachycephalic breeds. Among other things, they had stated that vets should not promote the ownership of these dogs. One of their clients, a pug owner, now refuses to see the vet and books an appointment with you. You share your colleague’s views on brachycephalic breeds. What would you do? (IP, January 2017, vol 39, pp 45-46). Anne Fawcett said that a compassionate vet would identify and address welfare issues with these breeds and communicate them sensitively to the owner. The welfare issues should be addressed without being biased by your own conflict of interest. Ideally, the client should walk away feeling like they have had an opportunity to be heard and be more aware of the signs of brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome to look out for in their pug.

I have been that vet! I appeared on BBC radio recently and echoed the position of the BVA that people should be dissuaded from buying brachycephalic pets.

I have also removed a client from our practice list for persistently breeding brachycephalic bitches requiring caesarean section.

We treat many brachycephalic dogs in our practice, but I do not shy from explaining the welfare issues of their conformation and I am content to challenge clients on their choices. That said we are rarely, if ever, asked our opinion on a potential purchase so once a puppy is bought we do our utmost with advice and, where necessary, surgery to give them the best life possible.

I would defend a colleague to the hilt if they promoted the entirely reasonable supposition that vets should only encourage choices and actions that aimed to reduce the net suffering and ill health of their potential patients.

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