

**RESOLUTION 2 —2017**  
**Regular Winter Session**

Submitted by—Board of Directors

**Policy on Inherited Disorders in Responsible Breeding of Companion Animals**

**RESOLVED**, that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) House of Delegates approve the policy on Inherited Disorders in Responsible Breeding of Companion Animals as shown below.

**Inherited Disorders in Responsible Breeding of Companion Animals**

The AVMA supports the responsible breeding of companion animals such that only animals without deleterious inherited disorders are selected for breeding. Companion animals exhibiting inherited characteristics that negatively affect the animal's health and welfare should not be bred, as those characteristics and related problems are likely to be passed on to their progeny. This would include inherited conditions such as brachycephalic syndrome, some joint diseases, bone deformation (e.g., radial hypoplasia "twisty cats", munchkin), heart and eye conditions, or poor temperament (e.g., Springer rage syndrome). The AVMA encourages veterinarians to educate breeders, pet owners and the public on the responsibilities involved with breeding and selecting pets to ensure that they are not contributing to poor welfare issues.

**Statement about the Resolution**

In 1999, the AVMA adopted a policy expressing opposition to the intentional breeding of "Twisty Cats" (cats with varying degrees of radial hypoplasia). In addition to radial hypoplasia, these cats are affected by other genetic and congenital abnormalities and typically have substantially shortened lifespans. Although that specific policy was eventually rescinded, the intentional breeding that propagates the existence of inherited disorders continues to affect a variety of companion animal species ([see visual examples](#)). The veterinary profession should advocate against the deliberate or careless breeding of genotypes that are known to produce suffering, serious disability, or premature death in companion animals. The proposed policy clarifies the expectations of the AVMA and supports veterinarians working with their clients to advocate for responsible breeding practices.

If approved, the policy would position the AVMA to engage the ongoing conversation involving the health and welfare implications of breeding companion animals. This policy makes explicit an AVMA position on responsible breeding which can be communicated clearly. This policy focuses on opposing the intentional or careless breeding of characteristics that have the potential to negatively impact the animal's health and welfare (e.g., brachycephalic syndrome, munchkin) and recognizing responsible breeding of animals includes direct efforts to detect and avoid passing on known inherited disorders (e.g., hip dysplasia in large breed dogs; mitral valve disease in Cavalier King Charles Spaniels).

While it is recognized that certain breeds are more likely to have individual animals that exhibit certain deleterious inherited disorders (e.g., brachycephalic breeds developing brachycephalic syndrome; Springer Spaniels having Springer rage syndrome), the intention of this policy is not to condemn individual breeds, but support the breeding of animals within the breed that do not have a familial history of inherited disorders or exhibiting any themselves. This may necessitate outbreeding until appropriate individuals can be identified within a breed. It is recognized that selecting against inherited disorders would result in gradual results that may take generations to resolve (e.g., necessity for artificial insemination/caesarian of English Bulldogs, extra vertebrae in Dachshunds predisposing them to disc disease). However veterinarians should work with breeders to reduce the need for these medical interventions in future generations.

It is important that the policy use the term companion animals because this issue moves beyond dogs and cats. Similar to brachycephalic breeds of dog, flat faced breeds of rabbits are more predisposed to dental disease, specifically malocclusion, due to the conformation of their skull. Some rat fanciers intentionally breed tailless rats, which is a variable trait that produces impaired and non-viable offspring. Traits that significantly compromise welfare will continue to arise in a wide range of companion animals and all these species and sectors are included in the advice relative to responsible breeding. The proposed policy will support productive collaborations between the AVMA and other veterinary, breed, and pet industry groups to encourage the eradication of inherited disorders, discourage faddish extremes of confirmation, and promote the appreciation and responsible care of sound and suitable household pets.

**Financial Impact:** None

	Board of Directors	House Advisory Committee	Reference Committee #2	House of Delegates
<b>Recommend Approval</b>		X	X-as amended	X-as amended
<b>Recommend Disapproval</b>				
<b>Recommend Referral to...</b>				
<b>No Recommendation</b>	X			
<b>Recommend Postpone Indefinitely</b>				
<b>Amendment to Resolution #2</b>				
Strike existing proposed new policy in its entirety and insert the following—				
<p><i>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.</i></p>				