

## Who is Responsible for this?

If you choose to bring a Great Dane into your home, you know from the outset that you are getting a large dog that is going to require a large volume of food, a large area to live in and larger doses of any medications. Therefore, it is obvious that keeping a large dog comes with some extra costs and these costs are obviously the responsibility of the animal's owner.

If you opt, instead, to obtain a small and/or brachycephalic pet (shih tzu, pug, Boston terrier, Persian...) you need to be aware that such a decision also comes with some increased costs. Previous papers from The CUSP ([microdogs.pdf](#), [FocusOnBoxers.pdf](#), [pericoronitis.pdf](#), the first part of [Dental Truths.pdf](#)) mention various serious dental problems associated with various breeds and/or head shape/sizes.

It came up on VIN. The question was, should the pet store that sold a Himalayan kitten be responsible for paying for the treatment of a malocclusion? The pet store policy is that they will pay for the treatment of a 'congenital problem'. Would we hold the pet store responsible if they sold us a Great Dane and it grew to be large? Would we hold the pet store responsible if they sold us a poodle and then it required frequent hair cuts?

If brachycephalism was good for the animal, we would see brachycephalic wild canines (wolves, foxes, dingos, hyenas) and felines (lions, tigers, lynx). As there are no wild dogs or cats with this skull type, it is a fair bet that it is an undesirable design. Natural selection only cares about what works, not about what looks cute to our eyes.

The pet-owning public needs to be made aware that every single brachycephalic animal (large or small) has a significant craniofacial deformity that has a negative impact on their oral health. Part of the cost of owning such a pet is taking responsibility for helping to minimize/manage the impact that this deformity imposes on the animal.

As long as people continue to purchase pets with craniofacial deformities, breeders will continue to produce them and pet stores will continue to sell them. So who is responsible for the congenital malocclusion in a Himalayan kitten? Society is for deciding that a deformity that would not survive in the wild is "cute" and therefore, desirable.