



Canadian Veterinary
Medical Association
Association canadienne
des médecins vétérinaires

One profession.
One strong voice.

Une Profession.
Une voix forte.



Advertising Imagery Guidelines

canadianveterinarians.net
veterinairesaucanada.net

Introduction:

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association CVMA recognizes that imagery used in advertising can have profound impacts on consumers regarding decision-making. While it can be a powerful tool to promote good animal welfare, some imagery may be linked to unanticipated negative or adverse consequences on animal welfare and should be used only after full consideration of the potential risks. This document outlines those risks.

The CVMA has produced this document based on relevant related position statements. Its purpose is to inform marketers of the inherent risks and harms and to assist them in making responsible decisions when using in promotional materials, including imagery of animals that may normalize certain negative traits or handling.

It should be noted that these guidelines largely refer to images (fixed or video images) of companion animals, where the current concern is the greatest. The same principles should however be applied to other species, including farmed animals such as those bred to exhibit conformational extremes.

These guidelines will ensure consistency with our initiative related to the harms resulting from extreme conformations as well as the following CVMA position statements (links below):

- *Humane Training of Dogs*
- *Keeping Wild [Native and Exotic] Animals as Pets*
- *Capture of Wild Animals for the Pet Trade*
- *Elective and Nontherapeutic Veterinary Procedures for Cosmetic and Competitive Purposes*
- *Responsible Breeding of Companion Animals (in development)*

Discussion:

Extreme conformations and animals known to have a high likelihood of inherited disorders:

The unique and appealing appearance of some animals has resulted in the use of their images by marketers and advertisers to promote products or services. Unfortunately, the prominent visibility of these animals in marketing and social media have, in many cases, increased the demand for certain breeds based on their unique appearance and behaviours. The exaggerated appearances of these animals often result in a suboptimal quality of life due to chronic anatomical challenges and/or chronic medical conditions. The increased demand has resulted in less selective breeding and in many cases the production of animals with poorer health and often profound suffering (current or latent) that is not immediately recognizable by the pet-purchasing public. It is important to note that there are still many responsible breeders who routinely remove animals with the most extreme conformations or other harmful heritable traits from their breeding lines with the recognition that mating affected parents will create similarly affected offspring.

It is the opinion of the CVMA that in the majority of cases, the public cannot readily distinguish between healthy and unhealthy animals within a breed, and that repeated exposure to images of animals with traits that may be deleterious to their health causes the public to normalize and accept potentially harmful traits such as extreme conformational abnormalities. In particular, snub nosed or brachycephalic animals have seen a massive increase in ownership over the past few years and the upward trend in ownership and concomitant decreasing health continues despite efforts by experts to educate and inform. The international veterinary community, including the CVMA, is working on many fronts, including reaching out to marketers and organizations that engage marketers, to harmonize our efforts to address this escalating problem.

Therefore, advertisers and marketers are asked to refrain from using the following imagery to promote products or services so as not to normalize what are preventable harms.

- **Short muzzle or noses.** Dogs, rabbits, horses and cats with 'flat faces' experience health problems associated with their flattened face, including respiratory issues, skin infections, eye disease, dental problems and spinal issues.
- **Animals that have a clearly overshot or undershot jaw.** This can decrease the comfort and function of a pet's jaw and teeth and usually results in chronic dental disease.
- **Bulging eyes.** This is a characteristic of some dog, cat, horse and bird breeds that will result in the need for targeted care and management to prevent eye damage and infection.
- **Visible skin folds anywhere on the body or head.** These folds lead to chronic skin health problems.
- **Bulging or domed skull.** This conformation is often linked to brain diseases such as hydrocephalus, herniation, and an incompletely closed skull.
- **Drooping eyelids.** These can predispose to a range of infections and other eye health problems.
- **Long back and short bent legs.** These animals are at much higher risk of suffering from back and joint problems.
- **Extremely long drooping ears.** Dogs and rabbits with this conformation are prone to infection and may need corrective surgery.
- **Animals that frequently require caesarian sections.** The CVMA believes that animals should be able to give birth without assistance.

Other images that may result in unintended harm

Images of animals should portray good husbandry and handling practices and should avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes or handling. Examples of images to avoid unless acceptable within the context of the image (e.g., the before of a before-and-after) include:

- **Physical Condition:** Animals that are grossly over or under weight. These animals are susceptible to developing health-associated issues and diseases, therefore images depicting pets should reflect animals of a healthy, normal weight. This type of image could however be appropriate if being used to promote weight loss or weight gain products.

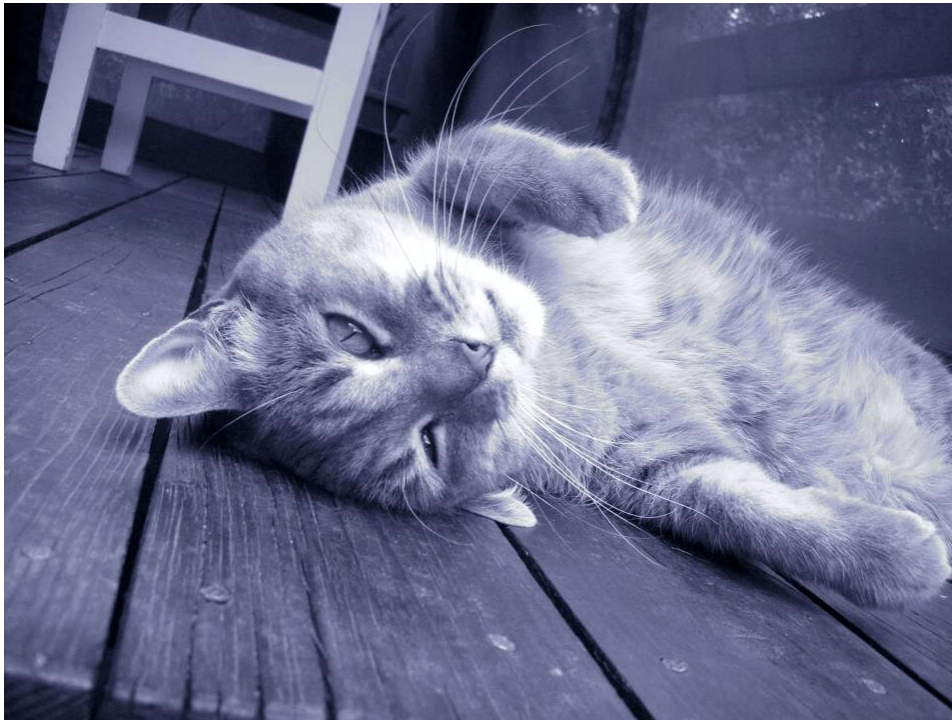


- **Cosmetic Alterations:** The CVMA opposes cosmetic surgery due to the risks imposed on, and the lack of benefit to, the animal. As such, images of animals with surgically altered characteristics should not be used in advertising to avoid the general acceptance of these procedures.

- o Docked or bobbed tails (dogs, cattle and horses)
- o Cropped ears
- o Declawed animals

- **Aversive Training Methods:** can cause fear-induced behaviors. Images which show such techniques or equipment should be avoided. Examples include dogs wearing shock collars, choke chains, prong, or spiked choke collars.

- **Exotic Animals as Pets:** Advertisers are urged to exercise caution when choosing images of exotic animals as pets and refer to the CVMA's Position Statement Keeping Wild [Native and Exotic] Animals as Pets and the Capture of Wild Animals for the Pet Trade. Portraying some of these species as pets without reference to a source, may inadvertently promote wild capture which the CVMA opposes. Exotic species often experience poor welfare because their owners are unaware of proper care, and simply because some species do not make good pets and/or are likely to experience stress or frustration when captive in a typical home setting, especially when their mental or social needs are not met (e.g., self-harm in some psittacine birds). In addition, the CVMA requests that images of wild-domestic hybrid species as pets, not be used as these animals often retain some of the more challenging behavioural characteristics of the wild progenitor. Examples include Savannah and Bengal cats which are prohibited in several jurisdictions for the reasons described.



Conclusion:

The CVMA recognizes that the selection of images by marketers is based on psychology and the desire to capture the attention of the consumer. We also recognize that the images selected have public appeal. But we ask that you consider the risks described and refrain from using imagery that may result in poor animal welfare, including unnecessary animal suffering.

The CVMA would be pleased to discuss these issues with advertisers. Our hope is that marketing companies will join us in acknowledging our collective social responsibilities and promote only health and welfare focused animal imagery to the public.

Links to relevant Position Statements:

Humane Training of Dogs

<https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/policy-and-outreach/position-statements/statements/elective-and-non-therapeutic-veterinary-procedures-for-cosmetic-or-competitive-purposes-formerly-cosmetic-alteration/>

Keeping Wild Native and Exotic Animals as Pets

<https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/policy-and-outreach/position-statements/statements/keeping-wild-native-or-exotic-animals-as-pets/>

Capture of Wild Animals for the Pet Trade

<https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/policy-and-outreach/position-statements/statements/capture-of-wild-animals-for-the-pet-trade/>

Elective and Nontherapeutic Veterinary Procedures for Cosmetic and Competitive Purposes

<https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/policy-and-outreach/position-statements/statements/elective-and-non-therapeutic-veterinary-procedures-for-cosmetic-or-competitive-purposes-formerly-cosmetic-alteration/>

Responsible Breeding of Companion Animals (in development)