

Brachycephalic dogs



Brachycephalic means short nosed, and is a description for many of the popular pet breeds, such as Bulldogs, Pugs, French Bulldogs, Pekingese, Lhasa Apso and Shih Tzu, which have the characteristic short or squashed nose appearance.

Brachycephalic dogs are increasingly popular pets around the world, but despite their popularity they can be affected by health problems linked to their head and body shape.

Two of the main problems are:

Breathing problems

Dogs with Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS) make more noise when breathing, even at rest, which may sound like snoring, snorting or wheezing. This can be made worse on excitement or stress, including heat stress. Care must be taken to prevent overheating of brachycephalic dogs in particular, as this can lead to severe breathing difficulties and collapse.

The main areas of concern in these dogs are:

- Narrow nares (nostrils) mean more effort is needed to breathe- An overlong soft palate (the roof of the mouth) can obstruct the entrance to the airway, which can cause 'choking' noises and again make breathing much more difficult.

These two problems, if necessary, can be surgically corrected by one of our vets, but if severe and left alone, the increased effort to breathe over time can cause secondary problems such as laryngeal collapse, and swelling and enlargement of the tonsils, vocal folds and muscles at the back of the mouth which further increase the effort required to breathe.

- Tracheal hypoplasia (small windpipe) mostly seen in English Bulldogs

The Kennel Club and University of Cambridge Respiratory Function Grading Scheme helps breeders of Pugs, French Bulldogs, and English Bulldogs lower the risk of producing puppies affected by breathing problems.

If you are concerned about breathing in your dog you can book in for a BOAS assessment with our registered assessor, vet Lisa Steinhage, at our Conway Drive branch, who will be able to assess and advise you further. More information is found on our website on the link below:

www.oakhill-vets.com/respiratory-function-grading-scheme/

Eye problems

Due to the shape of their eyes within their face, brachycephalic dogs can be prone to eye problems, as the large eyelid opening means they cannot blink completely which can lead to drying of the eye surface, resulting in irritation and even ulceration. The good news is that many eye problems can be managed medically or surgically so if you have any concerns please book in with one of our vets who will be able to advise you further.



Billy the Pug (left picture before and right picture after surgery) suffered with repeated ulceration of his eye, so our vet Lisa Steinhage performed an operation called a medial canthoplasty to make the eyelid opening smaller and increase the protection of his eyes and he's never looked back!