

Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS)

The term 'brachycephalic' (pronounced "Bracky seh falick") essentially means "short head" and refers to those dogs with **flat faces** such as **Pugs, Bulldogs and Boxers**, etc. Due to their flattened noses and faces, these dogs often have problems with their airway and as owners of these dogs, it is **important** to be aware of their **specific needs**.

You may notice brachycephalic breeds make a lot of **snorting noises** when they breathe. This is due to 3 main problems in their airways (which often require surgery to correct):

- **Stenotic nares:** This is the **narrowed nostrils** you may notice in these breeds - often the nostrils will only have slit-like openings, making breathing much more difficult. Dogs with stenotic nares **require surgery to widen the openings to allow easier breathing**. This can be done **from 5 months** of age.
- **Elongated soft palate:** the soft palate sits at the back of the roof of the mouth and is responsible for **stopping food going into our lungs** when we swallow. Because of their short noses, the soft palate in brachycephalic breeds is **often too long**. This soft palate can become **trapped** over the opening to the windpipe **causing problems breathing**. To correct this, **surgery is performed to shorten the soft palate**.
- **Everted laryngeal sacculles:** these are sacs that sit near the larynx in the throat and because of the **increased breathing effort** of brachycephalic breeds they will often **turn inside out**. Sometimes they return to normal after nares and soft palate surgery but occasionally they also need corrective surgery.

Brachycephalic dogs have to put **more effort into breathing**, and this can cause their airways to become inflamed and swollen making it even harder for air to get through. This can ultimately lead to **complete blockage** of the airways and **collapse** which is a **life-threatening emergency**.

To **help prevent this**, be mindful of:

- **Heat stress** - keep your dog cool (inside with air conditioner on during hot days), with unlimited access to water. Never leave them locked in the car.
- **Healthy weight** - Extra fat can narrow airways and increase body temperature
- **Excitement & stress** - keep them calm and relaxed! Basic training such as 'sit' and 'lie down' can help reduce excited jumping and spinning. Minimise exposure to stressful/scary situations
- **Exercise** - during warmer months, exercise early morning and evening when temperatures have dropped. Don't make exercise too strenuous - gentle walks are safer than excited ball retrieving!

Brachycephalics can be **lovely dogs with plenty of personality** and with care taken around their specific needs they can lead **long lives** and be **wonderful companions**. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact us at the clinic on **0357 214 000**.