



**FOREST**  
Veterinary Centre

[www.forestvets.com](http://www.forestvets.com)

## **BRACHYCEPHALIC UPPER AIRWAY OBSTRUCTION SYNDROME**

Brachycephalic upper airway obstruction syndrome (BCUAOS) is commonly seen in dogs that have been bred for a particular appearance. These include such popular breeds as Pugs, French Bulldogs, English Bulldogs and Cavalier King Charles Spaniels. The condition occurs due to the bones, especially those of the skull, being shorter than the surrounding skin or soft tissue. The result is one or more of the following problems:

- ^ Stenotic nares (narrow nostrils)
- ^ Elongated soft palate (the 'punching bag' at the back of people's throats getting too big and long)
- ^ Enlarged tonsils
- ^ Everted laryngeal sacculles (collapse of the upper airway)
- ^ Hypoplastic trachea (narrow airways into lungs)

Affected dogs will often have difficulty breathing which becomes worse with exercise or if the dog is hot. They may snore or pant a lot, or appear to be breathing through their open mouth all the time.

Often surgery can be helpful, especially if performed at a relatively young age (less than 12-18 months old) before some of the secondary, damaging changes develop. Surgery to open the nostrils, shorten the soft palate or to remove excessively large tonsils or everted laryngeal sacculles (see above) can dramatically improve the flow of air through your dog's airway passages. We also advise good weight control and, whenever your dog is on a lead, to use a harness rather than a collar as pulling on the lead can further narrow the airways making it very difficult to breath.

Diagnosing the problem is usually straight forward- as the abnormal breathing noises can be detected during a consultation- but is always confirmed by examination of the airways under anaesthesia. Following examination of the different structures (listed above) we can determine which procedure (or combination of procedures) is best suited to your pet. Any corrective surgery can usually be performed under the same anaesthetic. The surgical procedures are relatively straight forward and carry a very low complication rate.

Success rates with such surgery is usually good to excellent depending on the level of airway restriction there is to start with. Your dog will still likely snore and snuffle but the minor changes may make a big difference to your dog's life on a hot day or when exercising.

If you feel this may be of benefit to your dog or you wish to understand more, then feel free to discuss this with one of the vets and we would be happy to advise as necessary.

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