

# Brachycephalic syndrome

## What is a brachycephalic dog?

These are dogs with relatively wide skulls and short muzzles. The most common breeds include Bulldogs, Pugs, and Boston Terriers. Persian cats are also considered brachycephalic and can have some of the same problems.

## Pathophysiology

Problems seen with Brachycephalic syndrome can be classified as either primary or secondary.

- Primary problems include an elongated soft palate, stenotic (narrow) external and internal nares, and a narrow trachea,
- Secondary problems occur over time when the primary problems are severe and have not been fixed (e.g. everted laryngeal sacculles and laryngeal collapse)



## Clinical signs

Signs that you might notice in your pet include:

- Noisy breathing, particularly when inhaling (inspiration)
- Unusually loud snoring
- Decreased ability or willingness to exercise, particularly on warm days
- In severe cases, breathing efforts may become severely distressed, causing possible collapse and even death

**SEVERE DISTRESS OR COLLAPSE SHOULD BE HANDLED AS AN EMERGENCY. KEEP YOUR PET AS CALM AS POSSIBLE, IN A COOL ENVIRONMENT, AND TAKE THEM IMMEDIATELY TO THE CLOSEST VETERINARY EMERGENCY CLINIC.**

## Diagnosis

Clinical signs will suggest that your pet has brachycephalic syndrome. To confirm the diagnosis, your pet will be anesthetized and have a thorough oral and laryngeal examination performed. X-rays are frequently used to evaluate tracheal size and the condition of the lower respiratory tract.

## **How can surgery help?**

Surgical modification of the airway increases air flow. These procedures are

- Widening the nares
- Shortening the soft palate
- Removing the laryngeal sacculles

Your pet may not require all of these procedures. At VSC these procedures are performed using a surgical LASER, which results in less swelling, less bleeding and reduced postoperative pain.

Surgery is most successful if it is performed before secondary changes develop.

## **Expected results after surgery**

- Improved ability to breathe
- Generally, much less noise is heard when breathing/sleeping
- Increased ability to exercise
- If moderate to severe laryngeal collapse is present the results may not be as good.

## **Special postoperative care**

- Avoiding excitement and heat stress is important for the first 2 weeks after surgery
- You will be asked to feed your animal soft food for 2-3 weeks following surgery
- We recommend the use of a harness