

Cost of Cuteness- Breathing Issues in Brachycephalic Dogs

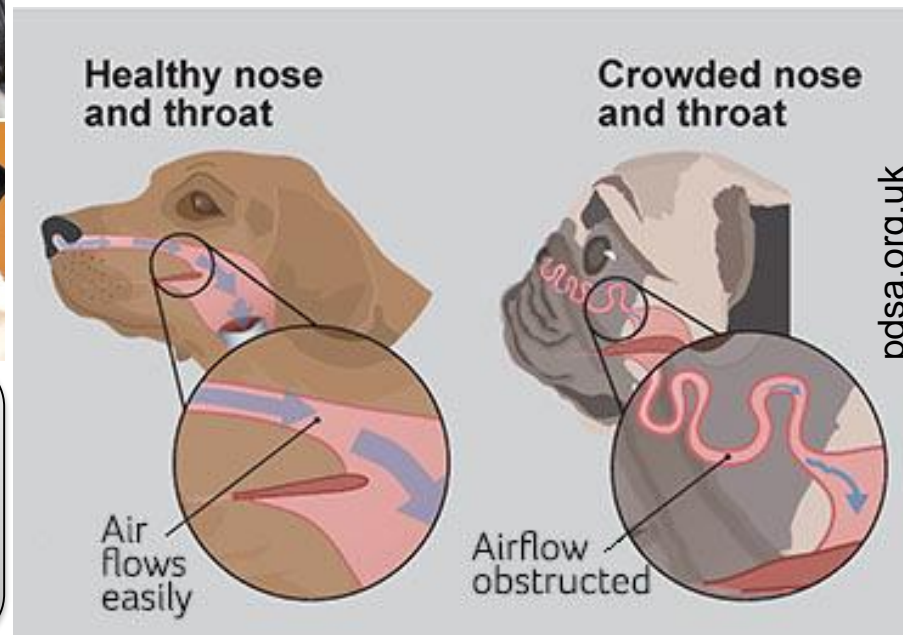


Breeds:

Popular brachycephalic dog breeds include the likes of *English* and *French bulldogs*, *Bull mastiffs*, *Boston terriers*, *Boxers*, *Pugs*, *Shih tzus*, *Lhasa apsos* and *Pekingese*.

Is the appearance of your pet enough to cost it their health?

Brachycephalic Dogs are the breeds with broad, short skulls and a flattened snout. This appearance has been attained through decades of *artificial selective breeding*, which has unfortunately cost many pets a healthy life due to the deterioration on their breathing ability. They suffer from a progressive, lifelong *breathing disorder* called '*Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome*' (*BOAS*), which impairs the dog's ability to exercise, play, eat and sleep, shortening their life by many years. *Common symptoms* include excessive snoring, wheezing, panting and heaving, with more *severe symptoms* consisting of a blue tongue and gums, glazed eyes, vomiting, diarrhoea and seizures.



Causes:

Bred specifically for the well-known "cute" flat face, the fast pace at which their skulls changed shape from selective breeding did not allow enough time for their *airways to evolve* causing this syndrome and significantly affecting their ability to breathe. Nearly 100% of dogs suffering from the syndrome have *elongated soft palates* which restricts air from being able to easily reach the pathway to the lungs.

Difficulty of breathing in these dogs has also been found to be linked to a *gene mutation* (*ADAMTS3*) in the DNA found often in bulldogs and French bulldogs. Although this is a part of the problem it is not the main cause.

Treatment and management for dogs with restricted airways

Management: *Obesity worsens the symptoms* of breathing difficulties as the extra fat can push down on the windpipe. For mild cases, clients can be recommended to control exercise levels and keep the patient at a health body weight to take strain off their trachea. Also by *mitigating stress, avoiding hot climates and using a harness instead of a collar* can also help the patient maintain a normal respiratory rate.

Short term treatment: *Anti-inflammatory drugs* such as corticosteroids (*ONLY TO BE PRESCRIBED BY A VETERINARIAN*) and *oxygen therapy* can reduce airway inflammation (swelling) or respiratory distress. These methods are good at controlling the condition however it *does not allow for a 'quick fix'*.

Long term treatment: If *surgery* is the option it should be done as *early on as possible* as over time the condition can worsen and *may cause other abnormalities* (unwanted changes to the body). The operation consists of *removing a wedge of tissue from the nostrils* which allows for a smoother exit and entry of gases to be exchanged, removing a part of the elongated soft palate (soft part of roof of mouth) to prevent obstruction or *removal of laryngeal sacculles* (sacs that aren't known of their purpose but can become inverted and protrude)

Ethics: *Is it humane to keep breeding this breed of dog* as we are consciously letting them be born with conditions that require ,medical intervention?

How to prevent: *avoid stress, heat and maintain ideal body weight.*



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