

BOAS

(Brachycephalic obstruction airway syndrome)

INFORMATION SHEET



What is BOAS?

Dog breeds with a shortened skull are called Brachycephalic breeds. BOAS is the term given to the effects that the shortened skull has on the passage of air through the airways. The shortened skull results in a number of abnormalities leading to obstruction of the airflow. Common abnormalities seen in these dogs are narrowed nostrils (stenotic nares), overlong soft palate and laryngeal collapse. Signs vary in severity from mild snoring and noisy breathing, to laboured breathing and respiratory distress. Gastro-intestinal signs e.g. vomiting, regurgitation and retching are frequently observed.

How do we investigate BOAS?

Blood tests should be performed to determine the general health status of the patient. Radiography can also be used to assess the length of the soft palate and to evaluate the lower airways (lungs). In addition endoscopy of the upper gastro-intestinal or respiratory tract may be required. A definitive diagnosis is made on direct visual assessment of the upper airway under light general anaesthesia. Surgical treatment is often performed under the same anaesthetic, as this reduces the risks during the recovery phase.

How can we treat BOAS?

Dogs with BOAS often present as a life-threatening emergency (signs worsened by stress, exercise and excessive heat) and require immediate stabilisation and surgery. Mild cases can respond well to conservative management, including weight loss (if appropriate) and exercise restriction esp. during warm weather. However, early surgical correction of the stenotic nares, elongated soft palate and everted laryngeal sacculles is recommended. Laryngeal collapse can sometimes be improved by surgical correction of these abnormalities, however many cases require more invasive surgical procedures, so early treatment of this condition is recommended.

What kind of aftercare is required following surgery?

Your pet will be hospitalised for 1-2 days. Your pet will be discharged with pain relief. Suture removal will be required 7-10 days post-operatively. A harness rather than a neck collar should be used lifelong. Your pet will require 10-14 days of house rest and should never be exercised during warm weather.

What kind of outcome is expected?

The success of surgery in younger dogs with less severe abnormalities is good. The most severe life threatening complications that can occur include complete airway obstruction, requiring placement of a temporary tracheostomy tube (breathing tube in neck), as well as aspiration pneumonia. In most cases the gastro-intestinal signs resolve following successful surgical correction of the airway obstruction, however a few cases may require further investigations and treatment for the gastro-intestinal signs.

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