

Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome (BOAS) in cats

Owner information sheet





Brachycephalic breeds are those with a “squashed faced” appearance and typically include the Persian, Exotic Shorthair, Himalayan and some British Shorthairs. Due to the anatomically shortened conformation of the skull and altered upper airways/soft tissues of the nose and throat in these breeds, essential airflow to the lungs can be compromised. Clinical signs vary from mild snoring/snorting through to severe life-threatening breathing difficulties. Noisy/raspy respiration and reverse sneezing are also common features.

The main concern in animals affected by BOAS is that they can struggle to breathe. This can be during normal daily life or during times of exercise or stress. Severe breathing difficulties may also be seen in hot weather due to the inability of the animal to efficiently cool itself.

In addition to the anatomical abnormalities noted above, the effort that is required to breathe is greatly increased, which can lead to secondary problems that can include acid reflux, vomiting, and sore facial skin. You may also notice difficulties in grooming, heat intolerance, snoring and struggling to sleep etc.

They require a dedicated owner who understands the condition and what to expect in normal daily life as well as problems that the cat may face. Owners must also understand the potential financial implications of owning such a breed of cat as care for these animals can be extremely costly, even if their pet is insured.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY RESCUE ANIMAL AND ME?

Your cat has been diagnosed with BOAS and may or may not have had surgery at the rescue centre by one of our veterinary surgeons to alleviate some clinical signs and improve their quality of life, however surgery cannot cure BOAS. The vet team is happy that your pet is ready for rehoming but please be aware that clinical signs may recur/worsen in future and may require further treatment or surgery which would, as the animal’s new owner, be your financial responsibility.

Please remember that there will almost certainly be exclusions on any pet insurance policy you take out. We advise you to seek clarification of what these are with your chosen insurance provider before you finalise a policy.