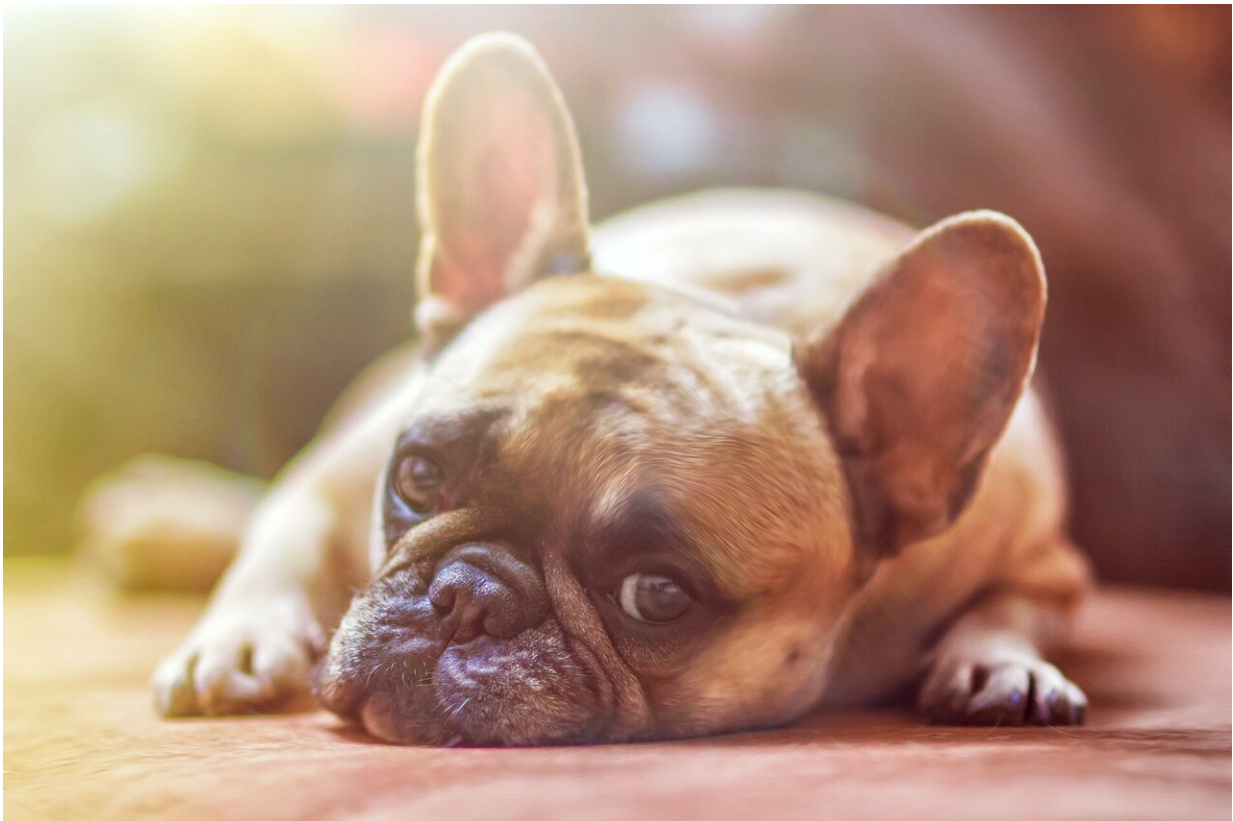


## **Scheme launched to improve health of french bulldogs, pugs and bulldogs**

February 5 2019

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A new screening scheme aims to provide breeders of French bulldogs, pugs and bulldogs with more information about the health of their dogs, helping them reduce the risk of breeding puppies with potentially serious

breathing problems.

Developed by the University of Cambridge and funded by the Kennel Club Charitable Trust, the new [Respiratory Function Grading Scheme](#) assesses [dogs](#) for the presence and severity of a breathing problem known as brachycephalic obstructive airway syndrome (BOAS). The scheme is currently available for the pug, French bulldog and bulldog, and has the potential to improve the health and welfare of these breeds for generations to come.

Dogs with a flat, wide shaped head are said to be brachycephalic ('brachy' meaning short, and 'cephalic', meaning head). The soft tissue in the nose and throat of some brachycephalic dogs may be excessive for the airways, partially obstructing the airway and making it difficult for them to breathe normally and causing heavy panting or noisy breathing. This condition is known as BOAS and is a progressive disorder that can impair a dog's ability to exercise, play, eat and sleep.

The assessment, which can now be carried out by a number of specially trained assessors located across the U.K. involves listening to the dog's airway both before and after an exercise tolerance test. Assessors then use a pre-defined protocol to grade the dog from zero to three. Dogs graded as zero are free of respiratory signs of BOAS, while dogs graded as three will show severe respiratory signs of BOAS, indicating that further veterinary examination is advised. The scheme issues guidance that dogs graded three should not be bred from.

These grades will be recorded on the Kennel Club's database and published in the Breed Records Supplement, on the dog's registration certificate, and on the Kennel Club Health Test Results Finder and Health webpages. The BOAS Scheme will be supported by guidelines for breeders, which enable them to understand the grade for their dogs in terms of risk when considering potential matings.

Speaking at the inaugural launch event, Bill Lambert, Senior Health and Welfare Manager at the Kennel Club said: "The high demand for these breeds, combined with the already recognised health problems has made brachycephalic health and welfare one of the most pressing canine issues in the UK, and one of the Kennel Club's top priorities. We're proud to have been able to fund and develop this important scheme with the University of Cambridge and continue to support further research into BOAS, together with the other steps we are taking to improve the health of future generations of these breeds."

"Launching the BOAS Scheme is a huge step in the right direction to improve the health of these brachycephalic dogs and protect the future of these much-loved breeds. It will enable vets to identify dogs at risk of BOAS, provide breeders and owners with the best available information and advice to make informed decisions and inform ongoing research into the condition.

Dr. Jane Ladlow, Royal College and European Specialist in Small Animal Surgery at the University of Cambridge, said: "The way that BOAS is inherited is very complex and so not always entirely predictable. We are researching the genetics of this condition but it is likely to take a few years before we have a viable genetics test. We have realised over the last few years how useful the functional grading scheme is in determining disease severity and it reflects the initial genetic data we have.

"The scheme is a vital tool to help advise all owners if their dog is affected by BOAS and gives guidance to breeders to lower the risk of producing affected puppies. It also, crucially, facilitates important data collection and enables researchers to monitor the frequency of the condition and progress in the [breed](#) affected, which will inform ongoing research, for the overall improvement of relevant breeds.

Dr. Ladlow and colleagues will be working with the Kennel Club and other organisations dedicated to improving brachycephalic dog [health](#) across the board through promoting the scheme and engaging vets, breeders and puppy-buyers to raise awareness and understanding of BOAS.

Provided by University of Cambridge

Citation: Scheme launched to improve health of french bulldogs, pugs and bulldogs (2019, February 5) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-02-scheme-health-french-bulldogs-pugs.html>

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