

Brachycephalic syndrome procedures: nostrils, soft palate, laryngeal sacculles



One of the most useful and efficient ways to convey information to you about your pet is via the written word. We carefully craft these notes to give you helpful information and accurate expectations around your pet's surgical experience.

Please read this. *Please save it and read it during each stage of the recovery process.* Surprises make for a stressful time for everyone.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Your pet has had one of more procedures performed to improve breathing (nostril enlargement, soft palate shortening, and/or sacculle removal). After healing, breathing effort should improve, but during the initial postoperative period, breathing can be difficult due to swelling and discomfort. Careful planning, close monitoring and quick action when difficulties worsen are required for a few days to weeks until recovery is complete. Please be prepared.

First few days postop

MONITORING

The most concerning postoperative complication is the inability to breathe immediately after surgery (when breathing tube is removed) or several days later because of throat swelling or regurgitated fluid/food being aspirated into the trachea. Access to emergency care and 24-hour care is essential.

Please keep your pet in a comfortable, safe, indoor location without free access to stairs for the next 24 hours as he/she recovers from anesthesia and surgery.

Your pet may be groggy for the next few days. He or she may whine or appear more anxious than usual; this may indicate pain/discomfort or side-effects of the medications. Please call your primary care veterinary team for assistance with medication adjustments or return for exam and additional pain medications as needed.

Monitor appetite and attitude. *If both do not steadily improve over the next 2-3 days,* please call your primary care veterinary team or return for progress evaluation and problem-solving.

You can expect your pet to have a bowel movement within 5 days. Some animals take longer than others depending on when they last ate prior to surgery and when they started eating after surgery. It may be abnormal in color and consistency for 2-3 days. If you have any concerns, please speak with your primary care veterinary team.

Please confirm that your pet has urinated within 24 hours of returning home. If he/she does not, or you notice any problems related to urination, please speak with your primary care veterinary team.

Closely supervise your pet's movements over the first 3-4 days when s/he will be groggy from anesthetics and pain medications. Do not allow access to dangerous situations/locations (i.e. stairs, furniture, small children, other pets). Limit activities to necessary events only (on leash/out to go to the bathroom; access to food/water.)

Please look at the incisions when you get home (if nostrils were treated); knowing what "normal" looks like is helpful later when trying to understand if the incisions are healing abnormally. Photos are helpful for you and us, when communicating from a distance.

MEDICATIONS

It is likely that you have been prescribed one or more medications (given by mouth) for your pet over the first 2-3wks of recovery. During the discharge appointment or shortly thereafter, please make sure you understand:

- what each medication is being used to treat,
- what side-effects may develop, and
- whether or not the medication should be refilled and continued.

Week 1-2 postop

MONITORING

If the nostrils were treated, please look at the small incisions twice daily. They should be dry with a light crust down the center. Over several days, they should lose redness and swelling.

Problems to call your veterinarian about:

- gapping (the edges should be exactly touching)
- ongoing or new discharge (other than small amount of crusting)

Bloody saliva is normal, if the soft palate was treated; it will resolve in 5-7 days. If this continues beyond this period, please see your primary care veterinarian for evaluation.

You may have been prescribed an antiseptic rinse. If so, please rinse your pet's mouth with the solution 2-3 times daily for 7 days. There is no need to "aim" at the surgery site; to minimize resentment, work from the side of the mouth, lift lip and gently squirt the antiseptic into the mouth. Most of it will drip/drain out of the mouth. Allow your pet to lick and settle, then gently pat face dry as needed.

Your pet's breath may be bad for the first week; thereafter it should steadily improve. If you notice his/her breath becoming or remaining foul smelling, please see your primary care veterinarian for evaluation.

PROGRESS EXAMS

Please return to your primary care clinic in 10-14 days for a progress exam. If nostrils were treated, skin healing will be evaluated and sutures will be removed, and any questions you have will be addressed.

DIET

The **most** beneficial and **least** expensive treatment for optimal breathing in brachycephalic breeds (and general health) over the lifetime of your pet is maintaining your pet on the lean/thin side of normal his/her whole life. Poor body condition, excess fat tissue in the neck, chest and abdomen, and exercise intolerance all make breathing harder. Good parameters to monitor body condition are:

- 1) you should be able to feel the ribs and pelvic bones, but not see them;
- 2) your pet should have an “hour glass” figure when viewed from above looking down;
- 3) your pet should have a tucked-up belly when viewed from the side.

RESTRICTIONS

Restrict your pet from any rigorous activity for 4 weeks. No running, jumping, playing. For dogs, short, leashed walks around the yard to urinate/defecate are fine. Walking around one level of the house is fine.

Please **always** use a short (6 ft) leash connected to a chest harness when taking your pet outside to urinate/defecate during this restriction period.

If your pet's personality-type challenges these restrictions, discuss options for medicinal-assistance for your pet to make restrictions easier to manage (i.e. Trazadone, Gabapentin, Tramadol, other).

Long-term lifestyle

The surgical adjustments we make to the nose and airway will offer benefit but should not be thought of as tools to make a brachycephalic pet an athlete with the breathing ability and stamina of non-brachycephalic pets. The goal with the airway surgeries is to improve airflow during breathing and thus reduce the effort of breathing. Snoring at night might be reduced. The physical abilities of walking and playing may be extended.

After surgical modification to the airway, your pet may still have some noise with breathing and some level of fatigue and heat-intolerance. Maintaining an appropriate lifestyle for these breeds is essential.

Checklist:

HOME MONITORING AND PROGRESS CHECK-IN WITH VETERINARY TEAM

- Pet attitude and appetite—Are these improving daily? What are your observations? What are your specific concerns?
- Breathing comfort—Is this improving daily? What difficulties are you seeing?

- Nostril incision health (if applicable)—Is redness and swelling going away? Is there discharge or gapping?
- Pet pain level—What are your observations? What are your specific concerns?
- Other

Based on your own experience through this, we welcome and encourage suggestions to this information that may help future patients and their people. Pay it forward! (directvetsurg@gmail.com)

--The DVS Crew