

The Kennel Club and
University of Cambridge

Respiratory Function Grading Scheme



The scheme

| What is the scheme?

The Respiratory Function Grading Scheme assesses Bulldogs, French Bulldogs and Pugs for a breathing problem known as BOAS (Brachycephalic Obstructive Airway Syndrome).

The scheme advises owners if their dog is affected by BOAS and gives guidance to breeders on how to lower the risk of producing affected puppies. A selection of regionally approved assessors (vets trained especially in BOAS) have been appointed to carry out respiratory function grading on dogs of these breeds.

| What is BOAS?

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 (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

How can I book?

A regional assessor list is available on The Kennel Club's website with all of the current assessors able to complete these assessments.

For more information, please visit www.thekennelclub.org.uk/rfgs.

How much does it cost?

Each assessor will have their own assessment fee which may vary between assessors. Please enquire with the assessor in advance on booking an appointment. This will include the £5 admin fee for The Kennel Club.

What do I need to bring?

You will need to bring your dog's Kennel Club registration certificate and microchip identification in order for your dog's assessment to be completed. An assessment form will be completed by the regional assessor and a copy will be given to you following the assessment, with another copy sent to The Kennel Club for publication including on the Health Test Results Finder.

What happens during the assessment?

Your dog will be assessed by a specially trained vet who will initially use a stethoscope to listen to your dog's breathing while they are calm and relaxed. Your dog will then be encouraged to move around an exercise area at a brisk pace for 3 minutes, either by the vet or yourself. The vet will then listen to your dog's breathing again and will use a list of criteria to give a grade.

How often do I need to have my dog assessed?

As BOAS is a complex syndrome the ways in which it can affect a dog may change over an individual's lifetime. Therefore it is recommended that dogs are assessed from the age of 12 months and that this is repeated every two years for their lifetime, or until you stop using them for breeding.

Grading & advice

What does each grade mean?

Grade 0: Your dog is clinically unaffected and is currently free of respiratory signs of BOAS. If your dog is under two years old we suggest they have an annual health check with their own vet, as BOAS can develop later in life.

Grade 1: Your dog is clinically unaffected but does have mild respiratory signs linked to BOAS. These signs do not affect their exercise performance. If your dog is under two years old we suggest they have an annual health check with their own vet, as BOAS can develop later in life.

Grade 2: Your dog is clinically affected and has moderate respiratory signs of BOAS that should be monitored and may require veterinary treatment.

Grade 3: Your dog is clinically affected and has severe respiratory signs of BOAS and should be seen by your own vet for a thorough veterinary examination with treatment. We do not recommend that you breed from your dog.

Breeding advice

The way that BOAS is inherited is not fully understood and is not always entirely predictable. Using the guidelines below can help you reduce the chances of breeding puppies affected by BOAS. However, even if used responsibly, this guidance cannot guarantee that a puppy from two unaffected parents will be free from BOAS.

		DOG ONE (sire or dam)			
		Grade 0	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
DOG TWO (sire or dam)	RFG Grade for each dog				
	Grade 0	Green	Green	Green	Red
	Grade 1	Green	Green	Green	Red
	Grade 2	Green	Green	Amber	Red
Grade 3	Red	Red	Red	Red	

Green: The lowest risk of breeding dogs affected by BOAS.

Amber: A higher risk of producing puppies that may grow up to be affected by BOAS.

Red: A mating which has a high risk of producing puppies that may grow up to be affected by BOAS. These matings are not recommended. Producing puppies affected by BOAS has a serious impact on their health and welfare. A mating which may produce affected puppies should never knowingly be carried out.

Results

What happens with my result?

Your dog's grades will be recorded on The Kennel Club's database and will be published in one or more of the following: breed records supplement, registration certificate, The Kennel Club's website (Health Test Results Finder and Health Pages).

If my dog was tested before 2019 am I able to send the results to be added?

Yes – The Kennel Club will accept results from dogs assessed during 2017 and 2018, providing the results are submitted on a signed and dated form including the dog's microchip and Kennel Club registration number and name.

Please email these results to:

health.results@thekennelclub.org.uk



Appeals

| Can I appeal my dog's grade?

Any appeals against a grade given to a dog must be lodged in writing to The Kennel Club within 30 days of the examination. Following this, the owner is eligible to take the dog, with the original certificate issued, for an additional examination under the Chief Assessor. The Chief Assessor will charge the normal fee. Should the Chief Assessor agree with the initial assessor the appeal will be deemed to have failed, and the Chief Assessor will inform The Kennel Club accordingly. In such an event no further appeal is possible. The decision of the Chief Assessor is final. Should the Chief Assessor disagree with the first assessment, the dog's new grade shall be referred to The Kennel Club for amendment. The final result of any appeal must be received by The Kennel Club within 90 days of examination, otherwise the first result may be sent to The Kennel Club for publication.

| Contact Information

Chief Assessor: Dr. Jane Ladlow

Correspondence Address and Contact Information:

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THE KENNEL CLUB