

## BREED CONCERNS C Jefferies (Chrishell)

Like any animal, French Bulldogs can be less than perfect and while every care is taken in relation to health checks of puppies and breeding stock, the odd pup can develop an unforeseen condition later in life, the most common for the breed are listed below and where possible with treatment and outcome. It must be remembered that the very condition which creates the unique format of the French bulldog, also leaves them susceptible to deficiencies that can be associated with that genetic make-up.

**Defective spine.** Hemi vertebra, Scoliosis, Kyphosis, degenerative disc. These are the most serious conditions affecting Frenchies.

**Hemi vertebra** may or may not pose a problem, even if present, but when present in conjunction with a bent spine, extra stress is put on the weakened area and can lead to pain and paralysis. Degenerative disc can have the same potential outcome. In minor cases, confined rest, pain relief and anti-inflammatory medications can resolve the immediate threat, but while some recover and live a full life, others succumb to the condition.

**Cherry Eye.** This can be due to a weakness in muscles or pressure exerted by inflammation or infection. The first thing to do is reduce (roll back) the protrusion to its correct position, immediately it occurs. Using the lower eyelid as a covering for the blown third eyelid, place thumb on lower, inner edge of eyelid and roll thumb inward with minor pressure and gently moving side to side, forward and back it can be reduced to its normal position. Confining with rest after applying anti-inflammatory eye drops often allows the eye to settle and some dogs may only have the occasional relapse during the whole of their life. Applying Visco tears will flush away any irritant and reducing the irritation allows the third eyelid to remain in place after reduction. NEVER leave the protrusion unattended or not reduced. Once achieved, confine the pup for a sleep, which will allow time for the third eyelid to settle into its correct position. I suggest you keep Visco tears on hand, as part of your first aid kit. Veterinary assistance with an anti-inflammatory eye drop could be beneficial in maintaining the integrity of the third eyelid, while swelling reduces and healing takes place. Sofradex used three times daily for a week will reduce inflammation, taking away the cause Worst case scenario is when the third eyelid is not retained and therefore surgery is necessary. The quicker this is undertaken, the easier the procedure and the quicker the healing. ENSURE THE EYE IS KEPT MOIST, WHILE WAITING FOR SURGERY. A number of effective procedures are available, with no further problems occurring during the dog's lifetime, hence the condition is more annoying at the time, rather than being a serious long term condition.

N.B. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES PERMIT A SURGICAL PROCEDURE WHICH TRIMS THE THIRD EYELID. THIS IS OUTDATED AND CREATES DRY EYE THROUGHOUT THE DOGS LIFE, WHICH IS TOTALLY UNNECESSARY. If suggested. FIND ANOTHER VET!

**Skin conditions.** A variety of eruptions can affect Frenchies or any other dog breed for that matter. Some pups can develop Juvenile Demodetic Mange. This is transient and often is not even noticed. If observing a bald area, which appears to have little black specks where hair roots should be, a wash with an Acaricidal dog wash, such as "Ectodex" will speed recovery and prevent further areas developing.

**Foot chewing** can be a favourite pass time for Frenchies and can become a habit. Prevention with firm direction and treatment of any underlying condition (often fungal, similar to athlete's foot in humans) will minimise any damage. A few days treatment with an antifungal treatment and hydrocortisone will alleviate the difficulty. In severe cases Nizoral given orally will clear the condition in 5-7 days, but please be careful and use only as a last resort, as this medication can cause liver damage in susceptible animals.

**A more serious condition** that can develop from 8 weeks through to 8 years is a skin allergy. This drives the dog mad with continual scratching and chewing, leaving raw areas that may bleed due to being so irritating. I only encountered this after 30 years in the breed. Two puppies in a litter (a total outcross, not one common relative) developed the problem. 4 others in the same litter suffered NO EFFECTS. After biopsies and expensive investigations, multiple theories of diet, food, and dust allergies were thrown up. Some improvements were made with special diets, Omega 3 and 6 and topical hydrocortisone, however any improvements did not last and we had to go back to the drawing board. Desensitising to specific identified allergens is possible, but often not practical. A Prednisone regime (Prednil) (a combination of prednisone and anti-histamine) stopped the problem overnight and it did not recur. Steroids can be dangerous and a careful administration programme MUST be worked out with your Vet. You are welcome to try other remedies which may be successful in individual cases, however in our situation this was not the case and a lot of wasted time, effort, money, and suffering was the result. Let's be clear, this was so severe, without prednisone, we were seriously considering putting the puppies down. These same dogs can also have an oily coat with a very pungent smell. This is due to bacteria build up on the skin and requires a special shampoo for (seborrhoea and yeast Malassezia) to keep the condition in check. Malaseb is an effective wash as is Pyoben, but it must be used on a regular basis. Some Frenchies, in my opinion, have a compromised immune system and this rather than a specific condition, could be the reason for some breed difficulties. A recent finding during allergy skin tests was that CATS can produce the highest allergic reaction recorded.

**Prolonged soft palate** and **stenotic nares** (pinched nostrils) can be present in certain Frenchies. They both impair breathing and can be present in combination. Difficulty breathing, wheezing are the superficial signs, particularly when exercised, excited or hot. This can put pressure on the airway and cause it to collapse (collapsing trachea) with the potential to cause the dogs demise. Surgical intervention is the only remedy and it should be undertaken earlier, rather than later, to prevent more serious long term damage. Frenchies with either condition should NOT be bred from. It should be understood that many good breathing Frenchies are able to flip their palate, allowing for a clear airway, whereas others with no longer a soft palate, unable to accomplish this, have breathing problems.

**Thick ears**, causing a **narrow ear orifice**. You must keep the ears clean and free from injury or infection. Scratching indicates a problem and left untreated a haematoma could result with the ear passageway being blocked off. Once air cannot circulate, the inner ear is a breeding ground for fungi and bacteria, with the only solution an ear resection. Wide, open ear orifices are as important as wide open nostrils. Select a pup with fine not thick ears and open ear canals

Generalised dog conditions can affect Frenchies as well as any other breed, but the above are the more notable, specific to the breed. Anaphylactic shock from bee stings can be life threatening and I suggest you carry an Antimine injection with you during the summer months. Ask your vet for this in the spring.

**Hips** are not generally great in Frenchies. Only about 5 in the whole world have ever been passed with an excellent rating, however minor discrepancies do not normally pose a problem as they are not a big heavy dog and as a dwarf breed are not built in the same way as a gun or working dog, meaning evaluation must be made in relation to the bulldog it is and cannot be compared to other well angulated breeds as the Frenchie is not one of them, neither is it supposed to be. This does not mean they are physically afflicted, nor should they be, but clinical evaluation may not identify perfection in this area.

