Screw Tails in Bull Dogs

Dogs such as the British Bulldog, French bulldog, Boston Terrier and Pugs are becoming increasingly popular. Their expressive faces and often goofy personalities make them extremely endearing when puppies.

However we are seeing problems associated with their confirmation due to breeding practices. The shortened, or kinked tail is known as a “screw tail”. These are tails that exist because of variety of malformed and fused vertebrae and their presence is often an indicator of other vertebral bone abnormalities in the upper back where vertebrae may be fused, kinked or shortened.

Skin care is often required around these tails as well as in some cases the tail may be fused down and not be able to move out of the way of the anus. Faeces.can get stuck and require regular cleaning. The skin folds around the tail base may also be quite deep and require hygienic maintenance too to avoid moist dermatitis and yeast infections.

If you are concerned that your Bulldog may be itchy or extra smelly around the back end, please check in with one the vets and we can show you how to effectively clean and perhaps even diagnose a skin infection or full anal glands.

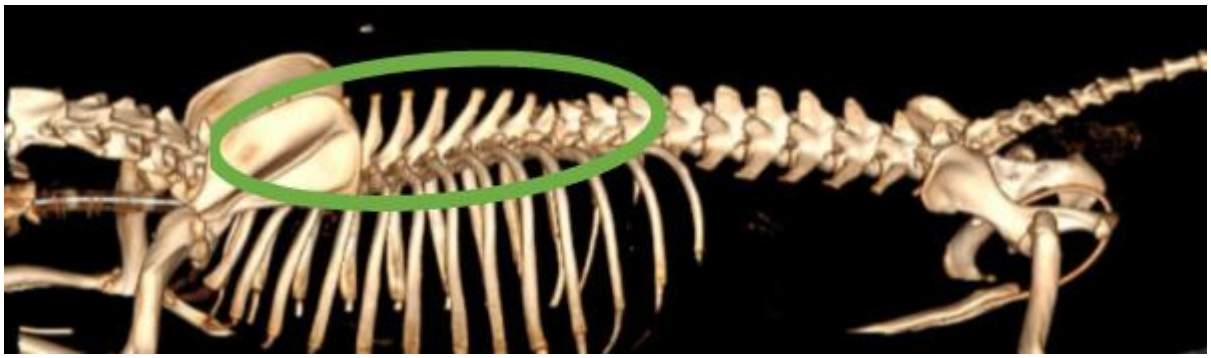
The effect of an abnormal spine on the leg strength, gait and mobility

- Have you noticed that your bulldog has an unusual walking style?
- Does it wobble in the back legs, drag their toes or appear unstable?
- Do they fall over easily when turning or struggle to stand after lying down?

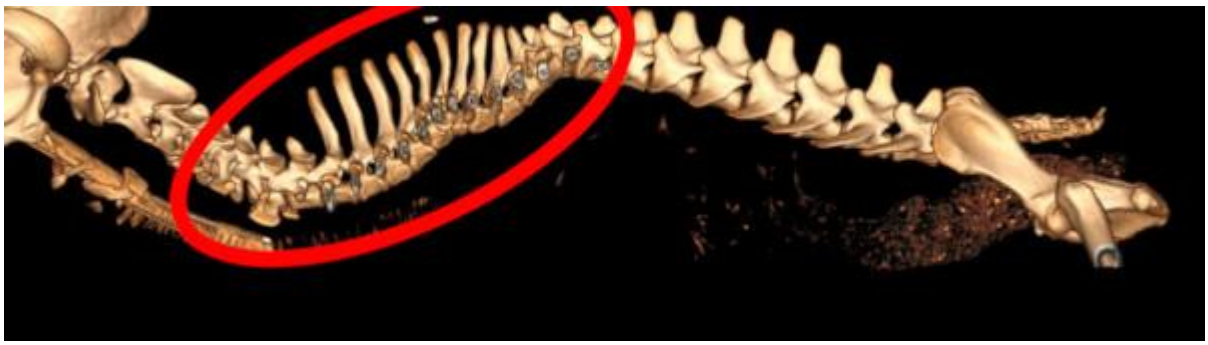
- Can your bulldog squat normally and pass a poo without excessive effort or incontinence?

If you answered yes to any of these questions then perhaps your dog has a spinal issue.

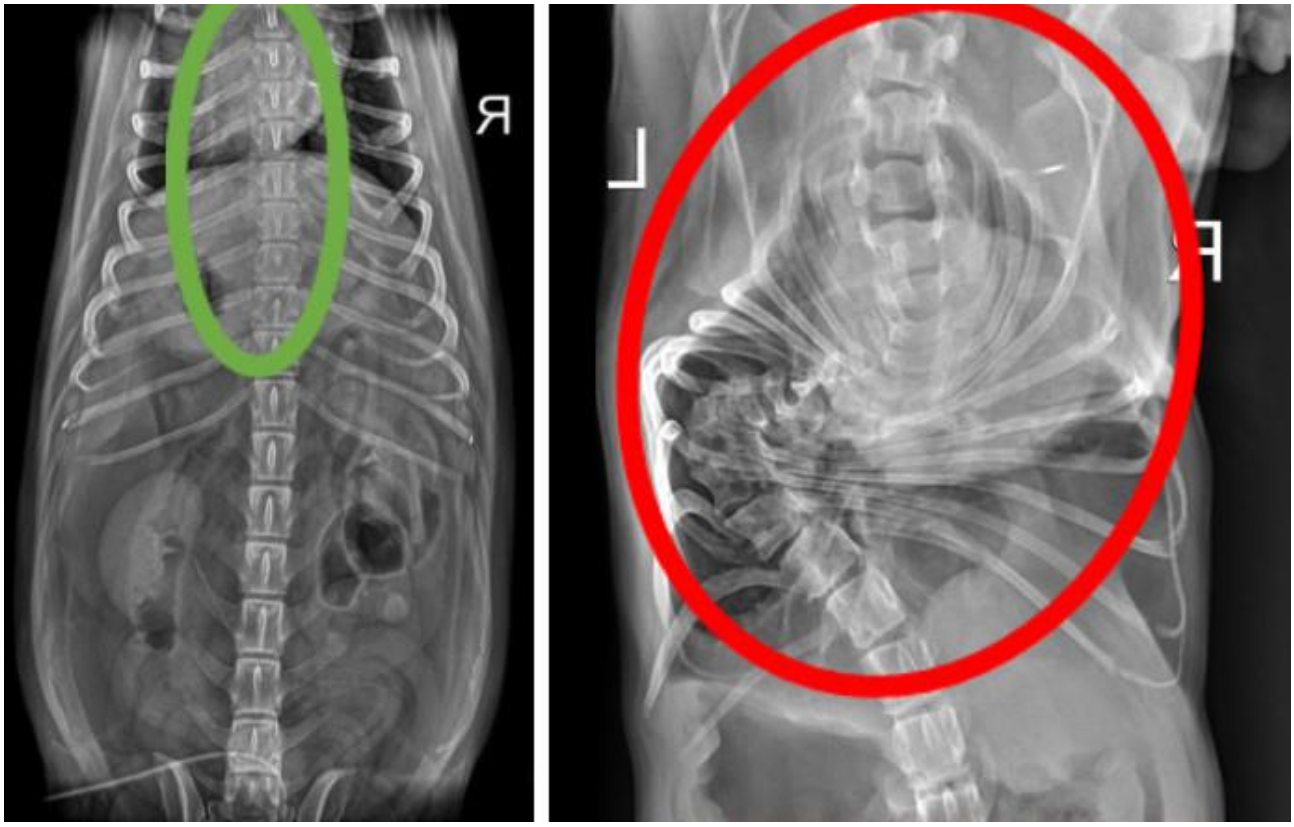
Radiographs, (xrays) and CT scans can be performed to look for abnormalities in the confirmation and therapies such as pain relief, laser therapy, acupuncture and sometimes even surgery may be needed.



CT scan from a normal dog as viewed from the side . The green circle shows a well aligned, normal spine as well as a normal articulated tail. Individual boney vertebrae exist that comfortably house and protect the spinal chord with regular intervertebral spaces that allow nerves to exit and to supply the muscles and limbs.



CT scan from an ABNORMAL dog viewed from the side that show abnormally shaped vertebrae, fusion and twisting of the spine as well as a fused spine.



These radiographs are showing the spine as view looking down from on top of a dog. The green circle shows normal aligned spine and the red circle an example of extreme malformation.

If you are thinking of breeding these breeds or purchasing a puppy, please come in an chat with us first so that we can help to ensure that future puppies will be as comfortable and healthy as possible.

These images are courtesy of the RSPCA and the Australian Veterinary Association Love is Blind - RSPCA campaign.