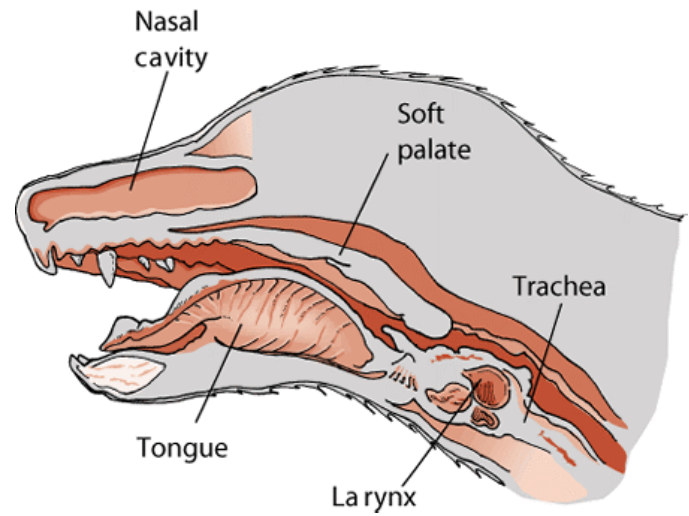


All that cavalier owners need to know about the "Reverse Sneeze" or "Cavalier Snort"

Occasionally, excited cavalier King Charles spaniels will suddenly stand still and start making a very loud snorting sound, over and over, as if they are gagging and having difficulty breathing. In cavalier circles, this is known as the "Cavalier Snort" or the "Reverse Sneeze". [A YouTube video of a cavalier making this sound is here.](#)

In cavaliers, this gagging sound usually is due to the dog having an elongated soft palate. The palate is the roof of the mouth. It is divided into two parts, the front bony hard palate, and the rear fleshy soft palate. The soft palate separates the nasal passage from the oral cavity. (See the soft palate at the top of the sketch to the right.)



An elongated soft palate is too long for the length of the mouth, so that its tip protrudes into the front of the airway and may get sucked into the laryngeal opening where it may obstruct the normal passage of air into the trachea. This is because the CKCS has a shorter muzzle than the average dog, and therefore all of the dog's breathing apparatus is compressed into a shorter space than the average dog.

When the elongated soft palate protrudes and partially or totally blocks the airway, the dog no longer can breathe through its nose. Since dogs normally breathe through their noses, they continue to try to do so, thereby causing the gagging or snorting sound.

Block the dog's nostrils and make it breathe through its mouth

If the palate is only moderately elongated and does not totally block the airway, most cavaliers are able to pull out of these blockages by themselves. Snorting may be relieved by forcing the cavalier to breathe through its mouth instead of its nose. This may be done by holding the dog's head down and mouth open with one hand while blocking air from entering the nose with the other hand.

In severe instances, the dog may collapse if the airflow is obstructed completely for too long. In such cases, surgical removal of excess tissue from the palate may be necessary. One of those procedures is called "folded flap palatoplasty" (FFP), which both shortens and thins the soft palate. Post surgery prognosis is good for young dogs. They generally may be expected to breathe much easier, with significantly reduced respiratory distress, and display more energy and stamina. Older dogs may have a less favorable prognosis.

In all cases, it is strongly recommended that only board certified veterinary surgeons who also are very experienced at airway surgery, be permitted to perform any type of airway surgery on cavaliers.

(This article has been excerpted from [“Brachycephalic Airway Obstruction Syndrome \(BAOS\) in the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel”](#) on our website.)

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