

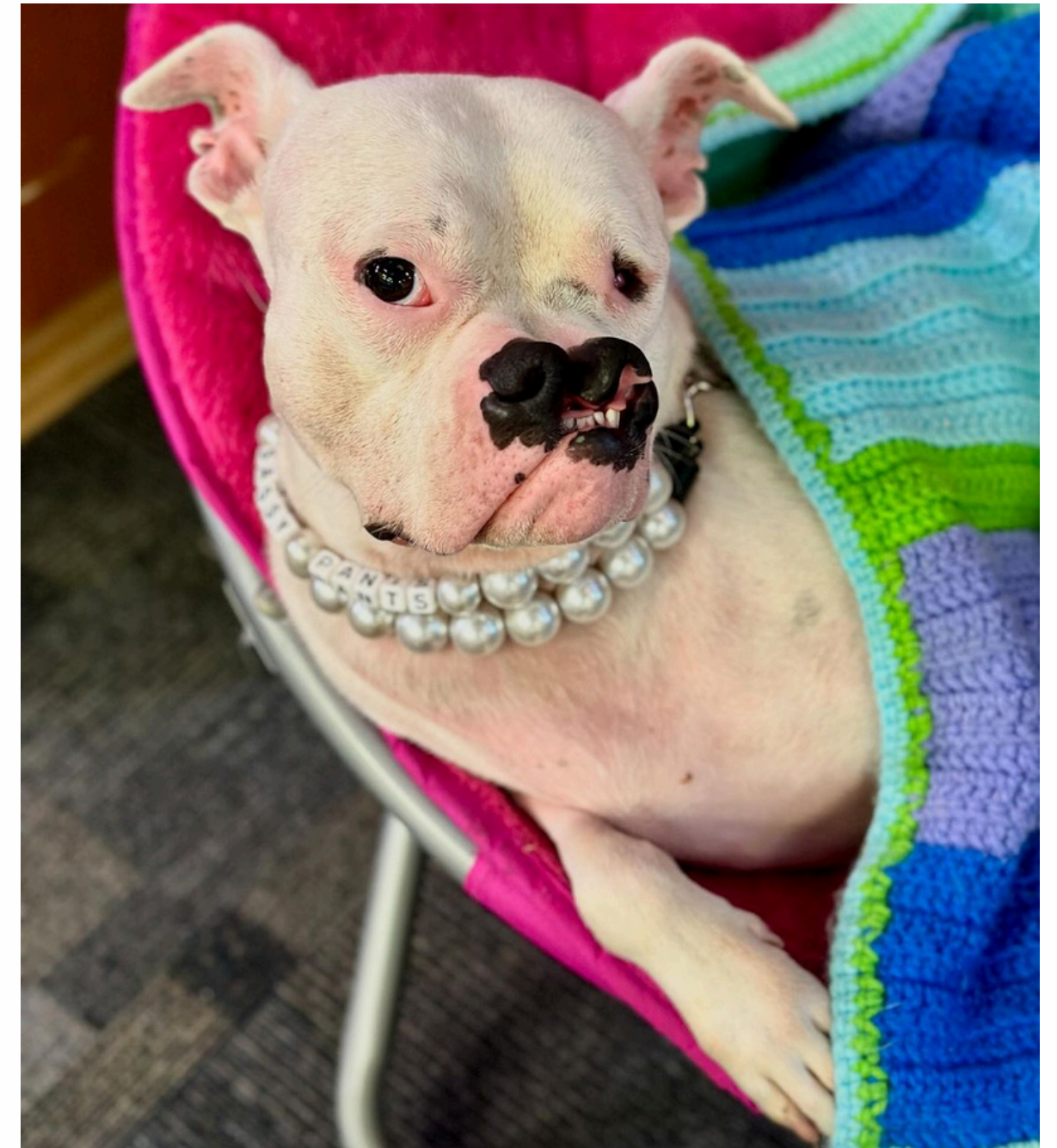


Cleft Lip and Palate



What is a Cleft Lip and Palate?

- Congenital defects in dogs and cats
- Tissues in the lip, hard palate (roof of the mouth), or soft palate (tissue behind the hard palate) don't fuse properly
- Creates an opening between the mouth and nasal cavity making it difficult or impossible for puppies (and dogs) to eat, drink, and breathe properly
- Most common in brachycephalic breeds like Pugs, and French Bulldogs, as well as chihuahuas and other toy breeds.
- usually inherited, but can also be caused by exposure to toxins during pregnancy and in utero injury
- Depending on the severity of the defects, many are euthanized early on before they are given a chance



Signs of Cleft Lip & Palate

- Visible defect in the lip, and palate during oral exam
- May not be recognized early if lip is not affected and hard palate is not examined at birth.
- If not recognized by exam of newborn, respiratory symptoms occur early on
 - Coughing
 - Gagging
 - Milk bubbling from the nose
 - Difficulty latching on for nursing on nipple or bottle
 - Sneezing
 - Snorting
 - Failure to grow normally
 - Sudden onset of pneumonia
 - Sudden death

Treatment

- Depends on the location and severity of the defects, and overall health of the puppy or kitten
- Supportive care with tube feeding initially for newborn puppies
- Careful to avoid aspiration, high risk for pneumonia
- Surgical intervention to close gap between oral and nasal cavity when old enough
- Choose an experienced skilled surgeon who is board certified (not a requirement)
- Specialty hospitals have 24/7 care which is usually needed post op
- Might require multiple surgeries
- Tube feeding while the surgical site heal
- Prognosis depends on the severity of the defects and the success of the surgical procedure

Prevention

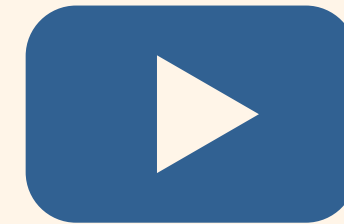
- Remove dogs that have thrown cleft puppies from breeding program
- Breed for traits that minimize the risk of cleft palate defects
- Introduce dogs with longer head, longer nose, and normal sized trachea into breeding lines to decrease the risk of puppies being born with cleft lip and palate



Support for Parents of Dogs and Cats with Cleft Lip & Palate

→ **Support**

Support groups found [HERE](#)



Check our Disabled Pets [YouTube Channel](#) for instructional videos

www.disabledpets.org

