



French Bulldogs 101

Is this the right dog for you?

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THE FRENCH BULLDOG

A Brief History

The French Bulldog is a relatively small, compact dog of bulldog type that developed from British bulldogs during the 1800's. When bull baiting and other blood sports were banned in England in 1836, the bulldog would have met its demise except for a handful of fanciers determined to preserve its unique characteristics.

When the Industrial Revolution in England mechanized the lace making industry, displaced workers from the Nottingham area relocated to France where the factories were not yet mechanized. These lace makers took their miniature bulldogs with them.

First seen with the lace makers in France, French Bulldogs became popular in the late 1800's in the red light district of Paris, where they were even sketched by Toulouse-Lautrec and painted by Degas. From there they became the darlings of the aristocracy and the elite: A Frenchie was the beloved pet of Princess Tatiana of Russia; King Edward VII of England owned one and one even went down on the R.M.S. Titanic.

While it is believed that small terriers and pugs were crossed with bully types to produce the earlier Frenchies there are no reliable records to prove if this is true. Wealthy Americans visiting France fell victim to the charm of the French Bulldogs and brought them to the U.S. which became instrumental in the development of the breed.

The breed standard was clarified in the United States and certain breed characteristics, such as the "bat ear" were mandated. The first French Bulldog show in the U.S. was held in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City in 1898, securing the breed's reputation as a high-society dog.

While their true origin remains obscure, both the English and the French lay claim to being the source of the breed.

The French Bulldog has been called "philosopher clown", and some say they're so ugly, they're cute! Regardless, they certainly make excellent companion dogs, and reward those who share their lives with them. Just ask any Frenchie owner.



I am not a pig, I am not a pug
My ears haven't been cropped,
My tail hasn't been docked.
I didn't run into a wall or get hit with a fry pan,
I do not bite,
but my owner is another matter altogether.
That noise is how I breathe—I am not
growling at your child.
I'm not so ugly I'm almost cute,
and anyone who says that is so stupid
they're almost smart.

**I am a French Bulldog
and I am perfect in every way!**

Author Unknown

**For more information about
French Bulldogs visit:**

The French Bull Dog Club Of America
www.frenchbulldogclub.org

Or visit:
The American Kennel Club
www.akc.org

French Bulldog Rescue Network
www.frenchbulldogrescue.org

French Bulldog Connection Rescue
www.frenchbulldogconnection.org

What to Avoid When Looking for a Puppy.

Avoid buying on impulse. Don't fall for that puppy in the window of a pet shop, or the one advertised in the newspaper, or the ad for a puppy you find on-line. And don't allow yourself to be swayed by a pet shop employee's sales pitch or a great ad you see someplace. And don't allow yourself to be swayed by thinking you are rescuing the dog by buying it. Go to a true rescue organization to rescue a dog and really help.

Avoid buying a puppy without first learning the parents AKC registered name and registration number and ask to see the pedigree. Be sure to ask the breeder what health testing they have done on the parents. If the person selling the puppy seems hesitant to open their home or kennel to you, or to answer your questions, look elsewhere. A well socialized puppy is one that had its upbringing in a loving and caring environment. And a well socialized puppy is one that will grow into a well socialized adult dog. If possible, you want to be able to spend time with the puppy in its home so you can see how it interacts with the other dogs and with you.

Avoid dealing with anyone but a responsible breeder. You want to be sure that the puppy you are getting will fit into your lifestyle and a responsible breeder will know the personality and temperament of each of their puppies and can help you make the best selection.

Avoid rushing into a decision. Take the time to research the breed you are interested in. Go to dog shows and see the dogs and meet their owners. Ask for referrals for breeders and talk with as many as you can. A reputable breeder cares very much about the home they place a puppy in and will take the time to discuss their dogs with you.

Avoid getting breeders names from ads or newspapers or on-line. Refer to local kennel clubs or go to the national club website for the breed you are considering. Most national clubs have established a breeder referral program and can help direct you to a responsible breeder

Avoid so-called "designer dogs". The French Bulldog Club of America does not condone the deliberate cross breeding of French Bulldogs with other breeds of dogs. A lot of the qualities that make a breed so endearing can be lost when mixed with another breed. And don't be fooled by sellers offering "rare" coat colors. Most of the time these are not acceptable breed colors and as sought after as the seller implies but are instead faults or disqualifying colors.

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The French Bull Dog Club Of America
www.frenchbulldogclub.org

Starting Out

Before you choose any breed of dog, first take the time to evaluate your lifestyle and ask yourself what it is you are looking for in your new family member so that the selection you make will be a good fit.

Some key lifestyle elements you should consider:

- Do I want an indoor or outdoor dog?
- Do I want a dog small enough to be a lap dog?
- Do I want an athletic dog for jogs or long walks?
- Do I want a dog that can get along with small children and other animals?

French Bulldogs are not for everybody. Since they are relatively rare, they are costly to purchase. French Bulldog breeders can be hard to find and often are protective of their dogs, so developing a relationship with a breeder is important. Speaking of relationships, French Bulldogs can have distinctive health requirements that may cause you to develop a close relationship with your veterinarian. Many vets have never seen a Frenchie so locating one who understands that what may be seen as a health issue in any other breed is a normal characteristic for a French Bulldog can be frustrating.



That said, a French Bulldog can be a very rewarding and enjoyable addition to your family. Those who live with them will tell you that they couldn't live with any other breed. So if you've decided that a French Bulldog is the right dog for you, take the time to research the health issues you could encounter with this breed and be prepared to go the distance should you need to. And take the time to get to know the person you are buying your puppy from and learn about their breeding program.

Puppy Mills, Pet Shops and Brokers. Oh My!

First, let's define what a responsible breeder is; A responsible breeder is someone who is involved with dogs because of a love for them. A responsible breeder is aware of what health issues are in their breed and is taking steps to produce healthy puppies through selective breeding programs. Responsible breeders go to the trouble of doing all the appropriate health testing and providing the best health care for their dogs. A responsible breeder cares about the homes their puppies go to and goes to the trouble of getting to know potential buyers. A responsible breeder will stand behind the puppies they sell and will mentor people who purchase from their kennel.

A puppy mill is a commercial breeding facility that operates for profit only, it does not operate for the welfare of the dogs. In fact, most of the dogs in puppy mills live in deplorable conditions. Which means that their offspring are born and raised under the same conditions. Sadly, most puppies produced by puppy mills are unhealthy, not at all socialized and tend to be difficult to live with as adults because their poor beginning makes it hard for them to adapt. These dogs spend their lives in cages with little or no human companionship, and they receive little or no veterinary care. If not sold as puppies, adults are used strictly for breeding and then either killed or abandoned or passed on to other puppy mills.

Brokers act as an agent for a commercial breeder putting together sales of the breeder's animals. Sometimes they will purchase an entire litter and then sell the puppies. Often the puppies they represent for sale have been imported from out of the country or they come from breeders who do not follow responsible breeding practices. This is a "for profit only" business to them, they do not have an interest in where the puppies came from, where they go or what condition they are in. And most of these puppies live in poor conditions as they wait to be sold.

Pet shops usually get their puppies from puppy mills or brokers or they import puppies from out of the country. While it is always risky to ship a French Bulldog of any age, these puppies are shipped at such young ages that most of them arrive at their destinations dead or very ill, creating unhealthy conditions in pet shops. Some of these puppies are taken from their mothers at too young an age. Unfortunately, without proper nurturing from their mothers, puppies like this can end up being unhealthy, poorly adjusted adults.

Choosing a Breeder.

Finding a breeder to buy your Frenchie from can be difficult. Always try to make personal contact with a breeder either by phone or by attending a local dog show and introducing yourself. Responsible breeders are protective of their dogs and often question potential buyers extensively. These breeders want to be sure a potential owner understands the care a Frenchie requires before they entrust them with one of their dogs.

Be patient. Take the time to do the research so you can speak in a knowledgeable manner about the breed. Don't feel offended if the breeder asks you a lot of questions. You want to deal with someone who cares about their dogs and is concerned about the kind of home they are going to.

Ask about the dog's pedigree and the health of the parents and always ask about any health testing the breeder does. If they are doing health testing you can assume they are doing their best to produce healthy, sound puppies.

Always buy from a reputable breeder, never buy a puppy from a pet shop, out of the newspaper, on-line or from a third party. And don't think that buying a puppy from one of these sources will rescue it from a miserable life. All you will do is make their unethical practices prosperous for them which will only encourage this type of animal abuse. Find a breeder who is trying to improve the breed and will be a mentor for you throughout the life of your pet. Many reputable FBDCA members place their puppies nationally. And don't hesitate to go out of state to find the puppy you're looking for. Remember though, reputable breeders do not keep an inventory of puppies ready to ship to the public.

And remember; you are choosing a companion that will be with you for some time. Make sure the choice you make is one that will fit nicely into your life. If you are happy with your dog, then your dog will definitely have a happy life with you.



Breed Characteristics

Size

French Bulldogs can vary in size but most weigh between 22 and 35 pounds. The upper limit for showing a Frenchie is 28 pounds, which puts them in the medium size dog category. But they are still small enough to sit in a lap or lounge with you in an easy chair.

Hardiness

French Bulldogs are primarily indoor dogs. In summer, they are sensitive to overheating because of their flat faces. They can die if left out in the summer heat or exercised on a hot day. While many Frenchies cannot swim, they often enjoy a wading pool with a few inches of water in it to lounge in. In winter, they are not equipped for extended stays outdoors because of their short coats, but many do enjoy an occasional romp in the snow.

Some Frenchie owners will tell you they are the "hot house orchids" of the dog world and need to be treated as such.



Space Requirements

French Bulldogs adapt well to apartment living because of their low exercise requirements and because they are not usually too noisy. (There are always exceptions.) Since they are not normally high energy dogs they do well with just a game of fetch or a short walk. That does not mean they can get by without any exercise, simply that their exercise requirements are not equal to those of a more energetic breed of dog. It's important to note some Frenchies can and do gain weight easily so consideration should be given to their exercise needs.

Attention Requirements

While a Frenchie will seek the company of its human companions, they generally are happy just to be in your presence and don't require a lot of activity to keep them from getting bored. Given attention and consideration, Frenchies can be very well mannered dogs and a joy to live with. They are a true companion dog and want nothing more than to be part of your family.

Other Animals and Children

French Bulldogs generally get along well with children and other pets, as long as they feel their own needs are being met. Some Frenchies can be dog aggressive and some have a strong prey drive which can be a problem. Socializing your Frenchie at a young age is critical for its emotional development. As it is with any breed of dog, care should always be taken when allowing a small child to play with a pet as a child needs to learn to be sensitive to the animal. A young child should never be allowed to play unsupervised with any pet at any time.

Grooming

French Bulldogs are “low maintenance” dogs when it comes to grooming. Their short coats are easy to maintain with minimal bathing and they do not require trips to the groomer. They do shed twice a year but with the short coat that does not create a problem for living indoors. An occasional brushing helps with the shedding too. Ears and nails do require attention and should be cared for on a weekly basis. It’s also important to check the wrinkles around the face and tail to be sure they are clean. Watery eyes can also be a grooming problem and you need to be sure to check your dog’s eyes on a regular basis. There are several over the counter products available for use to clean your dog’s eyes and ears that usually work well. Always consult your veterinarian if any condition persists.



Training

Most Frenchie owners will tell you “you can train a French Bulldog to do anything so long as it’s something it wants to do”. They are intelligent and sensitive, and they respond best to encouragement and treats. Harsh discipline is poor training and usually results in a frightened, cowering dog. Most Frenchie owners find that their dogs are eager to please once they understand what is expected of them. Many do well at agility and obedience and rally events too. With patience you will find your Frenchie a willing teammate in any activity you choose.

Sleeping Quarters

A dog crate can be a valuable accessory. Filled with bedding, it provides a safe and secure environment for your Frenchie. This is a good place for your dog to stay during the night, or even at times during the day when you are not there to be with him. It becomes their own home. If you travel with your dog it will come in handy as a means to provide your dog with a comfortable, safe place where they can feel secure in strange surroundings..

While the use of a crate is recommended, it never replaces the need your dog has for your companionship. It should not be used as a means to house your dog all day and all night. We don’t recommend using a crate for disciplinary purposes either, it should be your dog’s safe haven. When used properly most dogs will seek the comfort of their crate on their own.



Veterinary Care

It’s important to have a veterinarian or veterinary clinic that you can rely on for your Frenchie’s health care. Always follow the vaccination protocol recommended for the area you live in and make sure all vaccinations remain current. Testing and treatment for parasites is something you and your veterinarian need to discuss and decide upon together.

While it can be difficult to locate a veterinarian familiar with French Bulldogs, most will express an interest in getting to know your dog and will learn as much as possible about the breed so they can be a positive force in maintaining your dog’s health. Caring for a French Bulldog can be as challenging as it is interesting. You will find that most professionals and their staffs quickly fall in love with these bat eared dogs.

Take the time to do some research on French Bulldog health so you are able to take an active part in keeping your dog healthy. The more you know, the more you can help your vet provide the best possible care.

Living with your French Bulldog

Health Testing

The French Bull Dog Club Of America encourages breeders and owners to health test their dogs. Testing is required for a Canine Health Information Center [CHIC] number. The intent of health testing is to promote better health in Frenchies by screening breeding stock for certain health risks that are genetic in origin. A CHIC (Canine Health Information Center) number is assigned to each dog after tests for eyes, hips and patellae are submitted. Information on CHIC can be found at www.caninehealthinfo.org.

Don't forget hip x-rays and spine information at OFA, see page 11.

Diet

Most French Bulldogs are little chow hounds and can quickly develop a taste for human food. Because of their circulatory systems and their breathing problems, watching your dog's weight is important. Feeding a good quality dog food usually works just fine, but adding a treat now and then won't do any harm as long as you don't overdo it. Finding a diet that works best for your dog may take some time but will be well worth the effort. Consistent digestive problems can indicate food allergies.



Puppies always require their own diet so care should be used when planning what you are going to feed your new Frenchie. It is also a good idea to ask the breeder what diet they have been feeding and make an effort to follow the same feeding plan. Puppies don't do well with sudden dietary changes, so if you must change their feed be sure to do so gradually over several days.

Always follow your veterinarian's vaccination and health care programs to help keep your Frenchie healthy. Developing a relationship with your veterinarian can be critical to your French Bulldog's being able to live a long and healthy life.

Lifespan

Most of the flat-faced breeds live relatively short lives. French Bulldogs normally live 8—10 years. With breeders putting an emphasis on breeding healthier puppies and with good care and lots of love from their owners, more Frenchies are living much longer lives, some to the ripe old age of 15 years or longer.

General Description

In the AKC Breed Standard the French Bulldog is described as an active, intelligent, muscular dog of heavy bone, smooth coat, compactly built and of medium or small structure. The French Bulldog's expression is alert, curious and interested. The expression should never be dull but rather intelligent and bright. For more information refer to the website of the national breed club, the French Bull Dog Club of America at www.frenchbulldogclub.org.



Coat Colors

Acceptable colors are brindle, cream, fawn, black masked fawn, white and all varieties of pied. In the show ring it is a disqualification for a brindle or brindle pied to be so heavily marked that it appears to be solid black instead of brindle. All colors are acceptable with the exception of solid black, mouse, liver, black and tan, black and white, and white with black which are disqualifications. Black means black without a trace of brindle.

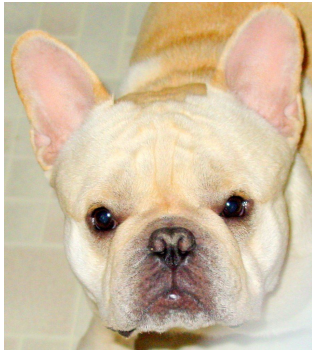
Other color disqualifications are mouse and liver, black and tan and brindle dogs that do not have black pigment. Mouse and liver colored dogs are also disqualified because their noses cannot be black. Breeders who deliberately breed colors that are disqualifying and sell them as "rare" and charge more money for those puppies, are not breeding to improve the breed. Deliberately breeding dogs with disqualifying characteristics such as disqualifying colors violates the Code of Ethics of the FBDCA. Dogs that are bred solely for their perceived color may frequently have health problems. Although this breed comes in a variety of colors, color should be the last consideration when selecting a Frenchie. Health, temperament and an over-all appearance that complies with the breed standard are much more important. Coat color should never be a consideration in the price of a French Bulldog from a reputable breeder.

The Breed Standard

The dog is the sum of all its parts making the standard for the breed important not just from an aesthetic aspect but for the health and soundness of the animal.

Head

The breed standard states the head should be large and square. The muzzle broad and deep and well laid back; the skull flat between the ears; the forehead is not flat but is slightly rounded. The stop well defined, causing a hollow groove between the eyes with heavy wrinkles forming a soft roll over the extremely short nose, the muscles of the cheeks well developed. The nose is extremely short, the nostrils broad with a well defined line between them. The head should be in harmony with the short, heavy body.



Ears

The breed standard makes it clear that only a “bat” ear is acceptable. The ears should be broad at the base, elongated, with round top, set high on the head and not too close together. Carried erect with orifice to the front. The leather of the ear should be fine and soft. Any ear other than “bat ears” is a disqualification. When the dog is alert the ears should be at a position resembling “eleven o’clock and one o’clock”. A bad ear set is considered a fault.

Mouth

The breed standard calls for an undershot bite. Which means French Bulldog mouths are reversed from ours and their lower teeth sit in front of their upper teeth. A scissors bite or an overbite is considered a fault. The standard makes it clear no teeth are to show when the mouth is closed. The teeth may be uneven which is common in this breed. The bite should be even. Being tilted left or right is called a “wry mouth” and is a serious fault. A protruding tongue is also a common problem with the breed and a tongue that protrudes from side to side can indicate problems with jaw alignment.

Flews

The flews should be black, thick and broad, hanging over the lower jaw, meeting at the under-lip in front; and covering the teeth, which should not be seen when the mouth is closed.

Spine and Hips

Like other dwarf breeds, most French Bulldogs have abnormal vertebrae. French Bulldogs are also known to have premature degeneration of the intervertebral discs. Herniation of degenerated discs is known to cause major problems and treatment should be the same as for other breeds, with crate rest and steroids.

A French Bulldog spine research program is currently being conducted by the Orthopedic Foundation For Animals. Concerned breeders and owners submit spine x-rays to the OFA for evaluation of spine abnormalities and the results of the research program to date are available on the French Bull Dog Club Of America website www.frenchbulldogclub.org under the All About Frenchies tab. According to the results most Frenchies have at least two hemi vertebrae, which the study has not been able to link to any health related problems. Hemi- vertebrae are abnormalities in the shape of the vertebrae in the spine.



Hip dysplasia is frequently seen in French Bulldogs. It is always advisable to have your Frenchie x-rayed so you know its physical condition. The age of two years is the appropriate time to have your dog’s hips x-rayed. Upon receipt of your dog’s films, OFA will send you an evaluation of your dog’s condition. Visit the OFA website at <http://www.offa.org> for more information.

Brachycephalic Syndrome

Brachycephalics are those breeds which have a relatively short head. Because of their anatomy, virtually all dogs of these breeds have some degree of increased work associated with breathing from the time they are born. The most common problems in French Bulldogs are an elongated and fleshy soft palate and narrowed nostrils.

Some Frenchies also have changes to the larynx and a relatively small trachea. It is always best to consult your veterinarian for a diagnosis if you suspect your Frenchie has difficulty breathing. Treatment options are available.

Health Care and Concerns

As a short-faced [“brachycephalic”] and dwarf [“chondrodystrophic”] breed, French Bulldogs have some health concerns that need to be considered. Their short faces make breathing less efficient than the longer muzzled breeds so the Frenchie is less tolerant of heat, exercise and stress. Elongated soft palates and pinched nostrils can also create problems

Any Frenchie that overheats from minimal exercise or becomes stressed too easily under normal circumstances, has noisy breathing, or spits up foam needs to be examined by a veterinarian and have its airway evaluated. If your Frenchie demonstrates labored or noisy breathing, or difficulty swallowing under normal conditions, that needs to be examined too.

Anesthesia is more risky with flat-faced dogs so you need to be sure your veterinarian is experienced in brachycephalic breeds should your French Bulldog need to be anesthetized for any reason. Even the most minor of treatments can be of great risk for your dog if anesthesia is to be used.



Allergies

French Bulldogs can be prone to allergies. These allergies can be caused by either external or internal sensitivity and can be frustrating to deal with. In such cases it is important to pay attention to the area in which your Frenchie lives as well as the food it eats. Working with your veterinarian to try to determine a cause of the allergies can be very helpful in getting them under control. And in some cases more frequent bathing can be beneficial.

Skin allergies are common in French Bulldogs and their causes can be difficult to diagnose. Paying attention to household items and products can be useful in determining causes should your Frenchie develop a skin problem. It's also important to keep your Frenchie pest free to avoid possible allergic reactions to pests.

Under-jaw

The under-jaw is deep, square, broad, undershot and well turned up. The most important thing is its curving sweep beginning at the hinges of the jaw on each side of the head, extending in a downward circular sweep reaching its greatest depth midway between the hinge and center front. It then forms a juncture with the upper jaw to hide the teeth when the mouth is closed.

Eyes

The eyes are the centerpiece of a dog's expression. The breed standard states that the eyes should be round and dark, although a lighter colored eye, but not a light eye, is acceptable in the lighter colored dogs. There should be no haw and no white showing when the dog is looking directly at you. The haw is the thin, third eyelid present in the inner corner of the eyes. The eyes should be set wide apart, low down in the skull as far from the ears as possible, round in form, of moderate size, neither sunken nor bulging.



Nose

The breed standard specifies that the nose color must be black and non-black noses are a disqualification. The exception to this is in the lighter coated dogs where lighter colored noses are allowed but not preferred. The nose should be short and relatively broad with large nares and a well-defined line between them. Large nares are essential to all breeds with shortened nasal passages, so that a sufficient amount of air can enter the lungs with minimal effort

Neck

The neck is thick and well arched with loose skin at the throat. If the neck is too short it will affect the mobility of the head. The head should be carried proudly. The topline of the neck should form a slight but graceful arch beginning at the junction of the neck and skull and extending to about halfway down the neck. It then forms a short curve to the withers.

Topline

There should be a slight fall close behind the shoulders with a gradual rise to the loin making the rear somewhat higher. This rise from shoulder to loin is referred to as a “roach”. A correct topline should minimize any problems with movement. Very short backed dogs may not show a clear “roach” to their topline and longer backed dogs may have a more pronounced “roach”.

Body

The French Bulldog’s body should be short and well rounded. The chest should be broad, deep and full, well-ribbed with a narrowing at the loins and the belly tucked up. When looking down on the dog it should give the appearance of being what is referred to as “pear shaped”, being larger at the front and smaller at the rear. The overall impression of the dog should be that it is a well balanced, muscular animal.



Tail

The tail should be either straight or screwed but not curly. It should be short and hung low with a thick root and fine tip. The tail should be carried low in repose.

Forequarters

The French Bulldog should have good width of front. The space created between the front legs, the chest, and the ground should be nearly square. To exhibit this characteristic the forelegs must be widely placed, well formed, of proper length and musculature, with good formation of the shoulder and elbow. The pasterns are straight and the feet are only slightly turned out. The feet are moderate in size, compact and firmly set. The toes should be compact with high knuckles and short stubby nails. Dewclaws may be removed and are the only alteration allowed in this breed.

Hindquarters

French Bulldogs should not be as long from the knee to the hock as most breeds, but there should be enough angulation in the hind legs so that the dog is not totally straight from its hip down to the ground. Straight hind legs are not only less attractive but can also produce poor movement. A “straight stifle” is very common in the breed.

The hind legs should be slightly longer than the forelegs so as to elevate the loin above the shoulders. The hocks should be well let down and the hind feet moderate in size and slightly longer than the forefeet. The toes are compact with high knuckles and short stubby nails.

Movement

French Bulldogs have an unusual way of getting around. When they trot their rear feet should track inside the span of their front feet and compared to most dogs they “move wide”

in the front, a result of their wide chest and short front legs. However, they should move freely and soundly. And the French Bulldog should have good drive and reach.



“Crabbing” occurs when the rear feet come around on the right or the left of the front legs as the dog moves forward and is considered a major fault.

“Crabbing” is common in puppies but should correct itself with age. Some dogs have such short backs that they are forced to “crab” when moving so their rear legs don’t hit their front legs. It’s important that French Bulldogs have the appearance of being well balanced when standing or moving.

In the hindquarters are the patellae, (often referred to as a “knee cap”) which are located in the upper part of the hind legs. It’s important for them to be stable or they can cause lameness which affects the dog’s movement. Patella problems can easily be evaluated by your veterinarian in a physical examination. However, patella problems are not usually identifiable in puppies.