

C-Section Protocol

Whelping Scotties is always challenging! Experienced breeders recognize when things aren't going well and the bitch is in trouble. Maybe she has been in hard but unproductive labor for more than 2-3 hours. Maybe she has already delivered part of her litter, but now seems to have given up. Maybe there is one huge puppy that you simply cannot budge. The tell-tale greenish discharge of placental separation promises a dead puppy very soon unless you DO SOMETHING.

Now is the time to pack up and head to the vet's for a C-section. If you have prepared well for this possibility, all supplies are ready and your vet is notified. Don't wait until 3 AM with frayed nerves to discuss the protocol for your Scottie. Get the details worked out in advance so your vet knows exactly what you expect. *What, you say? Tell him what you want? Doesn't the doctor know best?*

Not always. Most veterinarians are not reproductive specialists, and the number of breeder clients in most general practices is miniscule compared to pet owners. Not many vets are breeders themselves, and few take time out of their busy days to keep current on reproductive problems, including up-to-date anesthetic protocols for C-sections. While most deliveries have happy outcomes, I hear about too many nightmare C-sections. It is challenging enough to get those Scottie pups to two weeks of age after a *normal* whelping. Let's at least make sure we don't add needless anesthetic death to the picture.

In response to my recent query posted on the Veterinary Information Network, both reproduction and anesthesia specialists were in agreement on the best protocol. I have condensed it into what I call **S.O.S** for a Successful C.

In an emergency C-section, the bitch is often exhausted and the pups compromised. **SUPPORT** of blood pressure and oxygen supply to the dam and the pups is absolutely vital to a successful outcome. This is accomplished with IV fluids, allowing the bitch to breathe pure oxygen for a few minutes before she is anesthetized, and administering atropine to keep everyone's heart rates up.

In order to keep drug dosages and time under anesthesia at an **OPTIMUM**, the bitch should be gently prepped for surgery while still awake. She can then be masked down with Isoflurane or Sevoflurane and safely intubated. Although many people think masking is the best way to go, some dogs struggle mightily when the mask goes on the face. If the bitch is uncooperative, it is far better to use the safe and ultrafast drug Propofol IV to induce her quickly, and then intubate her for the gas. Time is of the essence, and needless struggling is dangerous to the pups. Propofol is so fast that any depressant effects on the pups are long gone before delivery. **DO NOT** permit the use of sedatives, tranquilizers, barbiturates, or anesthetic agents other than those listed above.

C-sections require skill and **SPEED**. Make sure your vet has done many and is comfortable with this surgery.

Insist on being present to help with the pups. And be with your bitch as she wakes up, calming her and letting her smell her babies, so she knows all is well. Then take the new family home as soon as you can!