

Spay at the Time of C-section?

Think Again!

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It sounds like a good plan, having your bitch spayed during her C-section. After all, it is convenient, it won't affect her milk production, and it will avoid subjecting her to another major surgery down the road. So why not?

There are plenty of reasons why not! Dr. Cheryl Lopate, MS, DVM, Diplomate, American College of Theriogenologists (ACT), is a Board certified veterinary specialist in reproduction at the Wilsonville Veterinary Clinic in Wilsonville, Oregon. The following article is one of Dr. Lopate's client handouts, and it clearly explains why you should think twice about this procedure. This article is reprinted here with permission.

Reasons Not to Spay your Bitch at the Time of her C-section

There are a number of reasons why it is not recommended to spay a bitch at the time of C-section:

- 1) The blood supply to the uterus is markedly increased to support the pregnancy. Ligation (tying off) the blood vessels is performed after fetal delivery with the bitch under anesthesia. Both fetal removal and some anesthetic medications will cause a drop in blood pressure. As the bitch wakes up from anesthesia and blood pressure increases to normal, a vessel may leak or a ligature may pop off resulting in hemorrhage, which may require either another surgery or, if it occurs rapidly and severely, may result in death.
- 2) There are many vessels within the broad ligament (the structure that supports the uterus and ovaries) and they all must also be ligated during a spay. If any are not ligated completely, they may ooze or hemorrhage resulting in a similar outcome to #1 above.
- 3) The bitch shares one third of her blood volume with the fetuses. While a small portion of that shared blood volume is removed with the fetuses, a large amount is left within the uterine lumen or within the uterine wall in the placental attachment sites. This blood can be resorbed by the bitch over time to return her blood volume to normal more quickly.
- 4) The rapid loss of blood resulting from removal of the uterus and its contents (described in #3 above) causes a marked drop in blood pressure during surgery which can result in cardiac or respiratory compromise or a hypotensive crisis during anesthesia, resulting in serious complications or death.
- 5) Pregnancy is a thromboembolic state – this means that blood clots occur with greater frequency in pregnant and early post-partum bitches. All bitches, whether they have surgery or not, are at increased risk for throwing clots, which can be life threatening if they go to the lungs or brain. Spaying, where multiple vessels are tied off and form clots at the ends where the ligatures are, will increase the risk of a clot dislodging and getting into the bloodstream. The most common deaths in the early postpartum bitch are following C-section spays either from blood loss or from a clot lodging in a vital organ causing peracute death.

- 6) Performing a spay at the time of C-section adds an additional 30 – 60 minutes of surgery time, depending on the size and body condition of the bitch and the experience of the surgeon. This is time spent away from the puppies who should nurse the bitch as soon as possible to get energy stores replaced and colostrum ingested.

For the reasons stated above, spaying at the time of C-section is NOT recommended unless the uterus must be removed because it is damaged or compromised.

To read more of Dr. Lopates's articles, go to her Reproductive Revolutions website at the following link: <http://www.reproductiverevolutions.com/index.html>