

Tips For Planning Your Bitch's C-Section

By [Joel Parraghi](#), *Croswell Veterinary Services*
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Everything you need to know to prepare you, your bitch, and your household for the upcoming Cesarean section.

Scheduling The C-Section

You can estimate a bitch will be due to whelp 63 days after the day she ovulates. Ovulation occurs when the progesterone reaches 4.5 to 10 ng/dl, and continues to rise by 2 ng/dl or higher every 24 hours. At our practice, we frequently schedule c-sections 62 days after ovulation so you don't end up in the middle of the night at your local emergency clinic.

In most cases, 62 days from ovulation is within 24 hours of her ideal due date. However, in some cases such as in bitches carrying large litters or without precise progesterone ovulation timing at the breeding, this timing may be off by a few hours. Because of this, we recommend you carefully monitor her for signs of labor (whelp watch) for 5 days leading up to her surgery to be sure she does not go into labor unattended.

Before The Surgery

Optional: Three days before her surgery, please apply an Adaptil (DAP) collar. These come in two sizes, and emit a pheromone that some believe help with maternal instincts for around 4 weeks.

A day or two prior to her surgery, you may wish to bathe her if you can do so safely. This means she will be cleaner for surgery and for taking care of her puppies. You may also wish to shave part of her abdomen to minimize the shaving the veterinary clinic will do.

You may feed her dinner the night before her surgery but do not give her food the morning of her surgery. She may have access to water until she is ready to travel to the vet. If she is on any medications, she may have those the morning of her surgery, with only enough canned dog food or cheese to coat the tablet. Ask your vet if you have questions about specific medications. Do not use any oral flea and tick medication

during her pregnancy, and please appropriately plan her topical flea and tick products to be applied no closer than within one week of her due date.

What To Prepare Before The C-Section

In advance of your bitch's scheduled C-section, have your whelping area ready for your arrival home.

This includes:

1. Having a quiet warm area of your home or kennel designated for the nursery. Limit access to this area to children, extra people, and dogs.
2. Whelping nest or other heated area.
3. Small children's plastic wading pool is an option.
4. Whelping and neonatal care supplies:
 - a. Rectal thermometer.
 - b. Room thermometer.
 - c. Heat source, avoiding heat lamps as they are fire hazards.
 - d. Tincture of iodine for umbilical cord care (optional).
 - e. Puppy digital scale to weigh puppies 5-10 times daily.
 - f. Record keeping system for weights, temps, urine color, etc
 - g. Marking system for puppies – be careful with neck bands.
 - h. Feeding tube. 10-14 french red rubber tube is preferred.
 - i. Puppy formula. We recommend puppy esbilac.
 - j. Medi-nurser baby bottle.
 - k. Bulb syringe and/or DeeLee Mucus trap.
 - l. Disinfectant for the whelping box.

What To Bring To The Surgery

Bring the following with you to her C-section, so you may assist with an en route delivery (we hope this doesn't happen) and safely transport your bitch and new litter home:

1. The bitch
2. CASH, as it is the only method of payment accepted at our clinic.
3. Your charged cell phone.
4. A tarp or vinyl tablecloth to cover the seats or floor of the vehicle.
5. A large crate for the bitch.
6. Blankets and towels.
7. Heating pad and inverter to run the heating pad.

8. Incubator, medium sized cardboard box, or ice chest (without any ice) to take the pups home in. Drape the towel across the inside to prevent the lid from sealing tightly.
9. Bulb syringe and DeeLee mucus trap in case she whelps en route.

What To Expect The Day Of The C-Section

Typically, you will need to arrive 1 to 2 hours prior to her scheduled C-section. At most practices, she will have the following procedures performed:

1. Evaluation for active labor, which may include a vaginal examination
2. Blood tests are drawn and run, which may include progesterone and pre-op bloodwork if not previously done.
3. Ultrasound and/or Radiographs (X-rays)
 - a. Checking Fetal heart rates, gestational sac health, fetal gut motility
4. IV catheter placement. Her front leg may be shaved for this.
5. Shaving for her surgery.
6. Medications ordered by the veterinarian caring for her.

What Happens During Surgery?

When the veterinary staff are ready to start her surgery, she will be taken to the operating room. She will have her anesthesia induced. Then they will start her C-section. In the past, some practices such as ours used to invite the owners into a treatment area where the pups are being cared for. This practice has been discontinued since Covid as we have discovered it is much less distracting not having the pet owner in the room during this important time for the staff to focus on the urgent care of the newborns.

It is best to allow the highly trained veterinary staff to provide neonatal resuscitation and care. After the pups are resuscitated, the staff will remove placentas, begin umbilical cord care, proceed with record keeping, and treat any pups with medical conditions as directed by the veterinarian. They will be moved to an incubator or warming area. Prior to leaving the veterinary clinic, ask if you can help her pups nurse for their first meal.

What Medical Care Do You Need To Do At Home?

After the C-section, a variety of medications will be sent home with you for your bitch and her pups. These may include:

1. Pain medications (Not always used at our clinic, feel free to ask why)– MetacamR (meloxicam) or RimadylR (carprofen) for post op pain management.
2. Reglan/metoclopramide – to aid in improved lactation by increasing milk production.
3. Oxytocin – to aid in lactation by increasing milk letdown. This is usually only done by injection at our clinic, and is almost never sent home with the client.
4. Nemex and strongid– as dewormers to start 2 weeks post partum.
5. Adaptil™ collar (rare) – if not already applied pre-op to improve maternal skills.
6. Plasma (rare) – for the pups, to be used via a feeding tube if there is any doubt about colostrum availability for the pups. We usually prepare this and dose the puppies before they leave our clinic if necessary. There is an added expense for this service, usually around \$75-150

Caring For The Bitch And Puppies After The C-Section

After her C-section, please watch for the following:

1. Monitor the bitch to be sure she is willing to accept and care for the pups safely. Do not leave the pups with her unattended until you are sure they are safe.
2. Monitor that she does not lay on the pups.
3. Monitor the pup's weights, rectal temperatures, and urine color 5 plus times daily, and record, to be sure they are gaining well and nursing adequately.
4. Bottle or tube feed the pups if they are not gaining well or staying well hydrated by supplementing them after each feeding every 2-3 hours.
5. Contact your veterinary clinic for assistance if the pups are constantly fussy, not nursing well, have dark-colored urine or are not gaining weight.
6. Monitor the bitch's incision, mammary glands, temperature, and appetite. Contact your veterinary clinic if she runs a fever over 103 degrees Fahrenheit, fails to eat and drink well, has a firm swelling of the mammary gland, or there are abnormalities of the incision.
7. It is normal for her to have bloody vaginal discharge the first few days after the pups are born, slowly changing to gray. Contact your veterinary clinic if

there is excessive blood, odor to the discharge, or an odd color to the discharge.

Preparing For The Next Vet Visit

Your next visit to the veterinary clinic will include:

1. Tail Dock and/or dewclaw removal for appropriate breeds 3-to-5 days after birth.
2. Suture removal for C-section 10 to 14 days post-op.
3. Deworming at weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8 for the pups (Nemex) and the bitch (StrongidT).
4. Health exams, health certificates for travel, [microchips](#), and first [vaccinations](#) at 6 weeks.

2nd Vaccinations and final examination prior to placing pups in new homes, with contracts after 8 weeks of age.