

## Should You Plan a C-Section?

**Know the facts about your dog and the possibilities of a Caesarean section.**

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Given a choice, most breeders would rather their females whelp naturally at home. However, if a Caesarean section is necessary, breeders and veterinarians prefer a planned – rather than emergency – surgery.

A planned C-section is preferable because it can be performed during regular veterinary hours, when staff is available to help with puppies, and nobody's fighting sleep in the middle of the night or trying to juggle other scheduled appointments during the day. The female won't be exhausted or possibly at risk because she's been unsuccessfully straining to deliver puppies, sometimes for hours. The puppies are more likely to survive because they haven't been stuck in the birth canal or had their placentas detach. The female can be readied for surgery as she should be, with food and possibly water withheld beforehand.

How do you know if you should plan a C-section?

If your female is an "at-risk" breed, you may wish to plan a C-section. The classic example of an at-risk breed that routinely requires Caesarean delivery is the Bulldog, but most other brachycephalic breeds (dogs with pushed-in faces) also have difficulty whelping naturally because of a large head and comparatively narrow pelvis. But some non-brachycephalic breeds often need C-sections for other reasons. Some are prone to uterine inertia, and lack sufficient pushing ability to deliver puppies, even though the puppies can fit through the pelvis.

The breeds listed below are known to often require C-section deliveries. Some breeds are more at-risk than others.

Border Terrier  
Boston Terrier  
Boxer  
Brussels Griffon  
Bulldog  
Bullmastiff  
Chihuahua  
Cocker Spaniel  
Dachshund  
Dogue de Bordeaux  
English Toy Spaniel  
French Bulldog  
Neapolitan Mastiff  
Pekingese  
Pomeranian  
Pug  
Scottish Terrier  
Sealyham Terrier  
Yorkshire Terrier

If yours is not an at-risk breed, that doesn't mean you're off the hook. Litters consisting of just one puppy, or litters containing an oversized puppy, may necessitate a C-section. These situations may be recognized by taking an X-ray a few days before a scheduled whelping.

If the dam is systemically ill, or has any green, yellow-green or red vaginal discharge, take her to the veterinarian with the expectation of a C-section.

The best course of action is to perform progesterone testing during breeding so you know the projected whelping date. Talk to experienced breeders and your veterinarian about your breed's incidence of C-sections. X-ray the dam several days before whelping to check on puppy numbers and sizes, and watch for signs of illness or abnormal discharge.

Remember, it's better (and less expensive!) to have a scheduled C-section than an emergency one.

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