

Caesarian Section / Dystocia

A cesarean section is performed when dystocia is diagnosed and is not responsive to medical management. Dystocia is defined as difficult birth. The cause of dystocia is centered around a small or deformed birth canal, fetal oversize, or uterine weakness (e.g. caused by exhaustion of the mother). Generally a cesarean section is performed as an emergency surgery, but in some breeds, elective cesarean sections are scheduled.

Common Breeds: Dystocia is common in brachycephalic, miniature and small dogs, such as bulldogs, pugs, boston terriers, yorkshire terriers, or may occasionally be seen in large dog breeds with an extremely large litter size. Dystocia is frequently seen in Persian and Himalayan cats.

Indications: If your bitch or queen has any of the following, they may need a cesarean section

- 30 minutes of persistent, strong, abdominal contractions without expulsion of a puppy or kitten
- more than 4 hours from the onset of stage 2 to delivery of the first puppy or kitten. Stage 2 is when the mother shows obvious abdominal contractions in her attempt to deliver,
- more than 2 hours between deliveries of the puppies or kittens
- failure to deliver a puppy or kitten 24 hours after the rectal temperature falls below 99 degrees F
- if the bitch or queen cries and displays signs of pain and constantly licks the vulvar area when delivering
- prolonged gestation (i.e. > 70 days from the first mating, or >59 days from the first day of diestrus (dogs))

Diagnosis of Dystocia: Bring your pet to the emergency hospital or your regular veterinarian if you suspect dystocia based on the above criteria. The veterinarian will examine your pet, performing a digital vaginal examination, radiographs and possibly an ultrasound. Radiographs will determine the presence or absence of pregnancy, pelvic structure, number and position of the fetuses, fetal oversize and death. Ultrasonography is recommended to monitor fetal viability and detect the presence of fetal stress.

Manual Treatment: The emergency doctor may attempt to manually deliver the fetus, but frequently this is unsuccessful and a cesarean section is recommended. Treatment of secondary uterine inertia may be medically managed if the birth canal is not obstructed.

Surgery: A cesarean section is recommended in the bitch or queen with uterine inertia unresponsive to oxytocin, pelvic or vaginal obstruction, uncorrectable fetal malposition, fetal oversize, fetal stress or in

utero fetal death. Elective cesarean section is indicated in breeds that are highly prone to dystocia and bitches or queens with a history of dystocia.

If the breeding was accidental or if no more litters are desired, an ovariohysterectomy (spay) can be performed at the same time.