



Managing Patients with Temporary Tracheostomy Tubes

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BRACHYCEPHALIC BREEDS: THWARTING TRACHEOSTOMY TUBE TROUBLES

Tracheostomy care is not one size fits all. Brachycephalic breeds present several challenges when temporary tracheostomy tubes (TTs) need to be maintained in these dogs.

- **Hypoplastic tracheas** often require smaller diameter TTs; however these TTs can:
 - » Decrease airflow
 - » Increase airway resistance
 - » Be obstructed more easily with secretions.
- **Neck conformation** is another issue: the curvature and length of the TT can greatly impact airway patency.
 - » The TT can be obstructed if the opening at the end of the tube abuts against the wall of the trachea.
 - » Alternatively, the tube may not be long enough to stay in the trachea and can either displace into subcutaneous tissues or come out of the stoma.
- **Skin folds and loose skin** can occlude the TT if skin folds drape over the stoma. Strategic placement of stay sutures can allow the skin to be tied back temporarily.

TT = tracheostomy tube



Figure 1. Brachycephalic breeds with temporary TTs provide certain nursing challenges:

- Due to this patient's head and neck conformation, the TT was frequently "falling out." In addition, its skin folds were draping over the stoma.
- Therefore, Velcro straps and umbilical tape were employed to secure the TT in place.
- Because this patient's skin folds were not obstructing its airway, no stay sutures were needed.
- Patients with larger folds may require temporary sutures to "hold" the skin back.



Figure 2. Stay sutures (labeled) surgically sutured around the cranial and caudal tracheal rings to allow easier replacement of TTs.



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