Managing Patients with Temporary Tracheostomy Tubes

Lila K. Sierra, CVT, VTS (Emergency & Critical Care)

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

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**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.