A 3-year old intact female German Shepherd Dog was presented for suspected abortion. She was bred naturally without progesterone timing and whelping was not expected for two weeks. Physical examination abnormalities included hemorrhagic vaginal discharge, delayed capillary refill time, and pale mucous membranes. Blood work findings included anemia and stress leukogram. Ultrasonographically, the uterus was distended with fluid, and a singleton fetus without a heartbeat was identified.

Surgical management was chosen due to the hematologic status of the bitch and non-viability of the fetus. During cesarean section, haematometra and necrosis of the right uterine horn were noted. A single fetus was located within the necrotic horn. The left horn was in good condition macroscopically. The fetus was removed, followed by unilateral ovariohysterectomy to salvage potential fertility. Recovery was uneventful. The bitch was bred naturally on her second heat postoperatively. She was confirmed pregnant and delivered two puppies without veterinary assistance.

Traditionally, the treatment for compromised uterine tissue has been complete ovariohysterectomy. Successful unilateral ovariohysterectomy followed by conception and normal parturition have been reported in the bitch, queen, mare, and doe. Indications for unilateral ovariohysterectomy include fetal retention, uterine torsion, uterine rupture, and haematometra associated with cystic endometrial hyperplasia. Potential concerns for future pregnancies include uterine rupture or cornuectomy site perforation, uterine torsion, luteal insufficiency, and dystocia or reduced neonatal viability. Unilateral ovariohysterectomy does appear to affect future estrous cycles though timing from surgery to first estrus is variable.

Prognosis for fertility is good in unilateral ovariohysterectomy cases if recovery is uneventful and the bitch cycles normally. Clients should expect reduced litter size. Ovulation timing, artificial insemination, progesterone monitoring, and cesarean section should be recommended for future breedings due to potential complications. This case represents an alternative to complete ovariohysterectomy allowing for preservation of fertility in reproductively valuable females.

References