

## EXPECTING PUPPIES

Your dog can get pregnant as early as six months old. It is recommended that you start getting ready for the puppies before they arrive. This article will tell you what to expect and how to make the delivery go smoothly. The gestation period is 58 to 63 days, no longer than 65 days, so you don't have much time.

### GETTING STARTED

The whelping box provides a clean and special place for birthing puppies. Whelping boxes can be purchased or made. The best are composed of strong, smooth wood, with sides high enough to keep puppies in and low enough that the mother can get in and out easily. The inside of the box should have a narrow ledge to prevent the mother from squashing the puppies. The ideal box should be large enough that the mother can stretch out. The whelping box should be placed in a dry, warm (70° F), quiet area. A laundry room is best. Be sure to line the box with many layers of newspapers. This will help keep the mother and puppies clean.

### EXERCISE AND FEEDING

Exercise your dog normally up to three to four weeks into the pregnancy, but don't push her too hard. At 40 days, gradually change the diet to a puppy formula diet. She should be eating twice her normal amount, maybe more. You might have to feed more frequently as well. You may want to add a vitamin and mineral supplement to her diet. Be careful not to add "extras" to the diet. You may cause developmental damage to the fetus, or complications with the mother. If you are unsure of what to feed, consult your veterinarian.

### DURING THE PREGNANCY

25 Days – You can have a pregnancy test performed by your veterinarian.

30 Days – Have the mother examined by your veterinarian, possibly to have an Ultrasound performed to determine the viability of the puppies. She will be starting to gain weight.

40 Days – Feeding change. (to what)

45 Days – X-rays can be performed on the mother to determine the quantity you could expect. **This is not always an exact count.** You can see the mammary area start to develop.

58 Days – Start taking the mother's temperature rectally twice a day. Keep a record of the daily temps. Normal temperature for a dog is 100 F to 102 F. Within 24 hours prior to the delivery, the temperature will drop as much as two degrees. The nipples may emit a watery liquid, and loss of appetite is often noted right before labor. Trim the hair and wash around the nipples to make it easier for the puppies to feed.

### THREE STAGES OF LABOR/

1. Mother can be extremely restless and very nervous. She may refuse to eat. This can last 6 to 12 hours before contractions begin. Be sure to walk the mother outside to urinate and defecate. She might not be able to do it later.
2. Contractions begin and a puppy is expelled. Usually a small greenish sac of fluid protrudes from the vulva. This is followed by the puppy and its attached placenta. About a third of puppies are born hind end first. For the dog this is considered normal. After delivery, the mother opens the sac, cleans the puppy and severs the umbilical cord. Make sure the sac is removed from the puppy immediately. Sometimes you have to tie the umbilical cord with fine thread if it continues to bleed. It is okay to allow the mother to eat one or two of the placentas. This is a natural for them. Don't let her eat any more, it can cause an upset stomach. If a puppy seems to be stuck in the birth canal, grasp the puppy with a clean

towel and exert steady, firm traction. Do not jerk or pull suddenly. Traction may have to be applied for as long as 5 minutes. **If you cannot remove the puppy, call your veterinarian as soon as possible!**

3. The resting stage follows each puppy's delivery. She may have mild contractions and pass the afterbirth. This stage can last 10 to 30 minutes or up to 1 hour. Be sure there is afterbirth passed after each puppy. During this time the mother can become nervous and want to protect her new family. Any aggression she displays will usually fade as time passes.

#### IF AN EMERGENCY OCCURS

1. 30 Hours have passed since her temperature has dropped, and labor hasn't begun.
2. 30 Minutes of hard labor contractions without a puppy being delivered.
3. 30 Minutes have passed since the membranes ruptured, and she hasn't had a puppy
4. Two hours have passed between the arrival of puppies.
5. Initial contraction is followed by a greenish/black discharge and no puppy. (This discharge is normal after the birth of a puppy, not before)
6. Cannot remove a puppy from the birth canal.
7. The dog is uncomfortable and the pregnancy has lasted 65 days.
8. If the mother is not willing to feed the puppies.

#### AFTER CARE

1. Have the mother and puppies checked by your veterinarian within 24 to 48 hours after whelping.
2. The bowel movements can be soft for the first few days, but if diarrhea or straining are seen, call the vet.
3. Check the mammary glands; clean the nipples daily with warm water. Watch for swelling, tenderness, sores or discoloration – if any are seen call the vet.
4. Vaginal discharge can be red with clotted blood for the first few days and can occur off and on for several weeks. If any other discharge seen, call the vet.
5. The mother can experience coat shedding during nursing, brush her daily.

#### PUPPIES

Room temperature should be 70° F, keep off cold floors. A healthy puppy will have a round stomach and seem content. Crying is usually a sign of trouble call the vet.

Tail docking and dew claws need to be done between three and five days old. Their eyes will open between 10 and 14 days old. Weaning can start as early as four weeks by pan feeding a blend of puppy food and water. Add less water gradually as the puppies get older. They will still need to nurse at this time. They should be completely weaned and eating on their own by eight weeks of age. Deworm the mother and puppies three times. This can be started as early as four weeks. The puppies will be ready for vaccines and new homes at eight weeks old.