



Canine Pregnancy Scanning

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Your Whelping Kit

When having a litter of puppies, it is very important to be prepared, this means having what you need on hand.

Listed below are some things you should consider.....

Most important, when your bitch starts to whelp, make your vet aware, in case anything should go wrong, have his number to hand so you are not fumbling about in an emergency. It is a good idea to have a box, or small carrying crate, and hot water bottles in case puppies are born en route or at the vets and you have to bring newborn puppies home in the car. You may want to have the car ready 'just in case' and lined with clean towels and blankets. Have transport arranged - if you have your own car ensure it is full of fuel and you have someone to accompany you, and you may need someone to stay at home and look after children, if applicable. If you don't drive, ensure you have transport arranged – not all taxi's allow pets, and definitely not one about to whelp a litter of puppies.

A lot of puppies are born in the middle of the night/early hours of the morning, some bitches seem to wait until everything is quiet, and everyone is asleep!

From birth to approx 2 – 3 weeks of age, the puppies need to be in a contained area, a whelping box – with raised sides and a source of heat – heat pad or heat lamp. Newborn puppies up to two weeks of age cannot regulate their heat and need to be kept warm. Any avid DIY'er can build a whelping box, you can even buy disposable cardboard ones available online, places like Pet Nap, who also sell a good range of essential whelping products including Welpi Puppy Milk and bottles – www.petnap.co.uk.

The whelping box needs to be lined before whelping, I prefer puppy pads and put several layers of towels and old sheets on top. Once the puppies are born I remove all used and dirty bedding and replace with clean puppy pads and VET BED available from ebay and online - <http://www.vetbeddingman.co.uk/>. It remains flat in the whelping box, gives puppies a good grip for when they move around and most importantly, any liquid on top of the bedding goes right through to underneath keeping the mother and puppies warm and dry. You also don't get the problem of puppies being lost in piles of blankets. Three or four good sized pieces to fit your whelping box and later, the puppy pen, will last you for years and years.

Calcium – A calcium boost will help the parathroid gland to release a hormone from her bones to help with muscles and pushing, but DO NOT give calcium until after the first puppy is born. You can buy calcium tablets/liquid from any good pet store or the online pet pharmacy's, without prescription. Birth and lactation make heavy demands on the calcium levels of breeding bitches. A bitch low in calcium may be restless, pant, and diminished co-ordination (staring into space). Some smaller breeds have muscle spasms, and even seizures if severely affected. Small breeds and bitches with large litters are more prone to this problem. As the puppies grow, and begin to drag more and more calcium out of your bitch through her milk (weeks 1 – 5) the risk of this condition increases. Once well established, milk tetany (also known as hypocalcemia, eclampsia or puerperal tetany) is an emergency situation requiring veterinary intervention, so stay alert, and nip it in the bud at the first signs of the condition with oral calcium, so you can avoid this potentially lethal condition.

It is a good idea to get your bitch used to the whelping box at least a week before she is due to whelp. If you don't they will want to have puppies where they feel comfortable, which may be your bed or the settee. The whelping area should be in a quiet place, away from

other animals and children so the bitch does not feel threatened. A good whelping box is designed to protect the puppies from the cold and the dangers they could face if they were able to roam free.

Dopram V – oral drops - Respiratory stimulant for newborn puppies and kittens, which helps to initiate or stimulate respiration following a difficult birth.

www.dandhdirect.com

Nutri drops – a liquid source of glucose, vitamin B, amino acids, vitamins A, D and E and trace minerals specially formulated for the dog breeding industry to provide rapid absorption of essential nutrients.

Puppy Stim – provides a source of energy and stimulates small, weak and underweight newborn or failing puppies

Puppy Colostrom – Replacement for bitch's colostrum. A routine first feed for puppies during the first 36 hours of life if mum has no milk.

At 3 weeks of age, the mother will spend less and less time with the puppies and you will want to start thinking about introducing solid food and weaning them, and it is at this stage you should move them to a puppy pen/enclosed area.

Puppies should be wormed at 3, 5 and 7 weeks, popular worming products are Panacur paste, and Drontal, both can be purchased at all good online veterinary suppliers ie: www.hyperdrug.co.uk and www.vet-medic.com .

Weaning can begin anytime after 3 weeks, and a good weaning product is Royal Canin Puppy Mousse, available from Amazon and all good pet stores. Puppies seem to take to this very easily and once taking this readily on their own you can introduce fresh raw minced meat or puppy kibble which has been soaked in goat's milk to make a porridge.

The Whelping Process

The physical signs of labour can include pacing, panting, and extreme restlessness. The Bitch will begin nesting by digging up the contents of the whelping box or your bed/settee! She probably won't have eaten for between 12 – 24 hours before labour starts, and some bitches can also have a bout of vomiting.

Second stage labour is the stage of delivery. Your dog will start to strain. If straining continues for more than an hour without any signs of a watery discharge or puppies, you should contact your veterinarian. First

time mothers should be attended by their owners until at least one or two puppies have been born and she gets into the swing of things.

Delivery times vary. Dogs with fairly slim heads such as Shelties, Collies and Dobermans may complete delivery of all the puppies within two to three hours.

Brachycephalic breeds, or breeds with large, round heads such as Bulldogs, Boston Terriers, and Pekingese tend to have more difficult deliveries and sometimes will produce one or two puppies relatively quickly and then rest for a while before labour starts again.

If your dog has produced at least one puppy and does not strain again within two hours, your veterinarian should be contacted.

I use the following parameters to help determine if a dog is having difficulty giving birth.

Greater than 4 hours have passed after the first rupture of membranes (water breaking) without a puppy being born.

30-60 minutes of hard labour without a puppy being born.

Greater than 2 hours between the births of puppies. Some dogs will take a break of up to four hours or so in the middle of giving birth to a large litter, so I don't panic if there is one longer pause and everything else seems normal.

The presence of green or black discharge before the birth of a puppy. This is meconium, a puppy's first poop, and when meconium is passed in utero it is indicative of fetal distress.

Heavy uterine bleeding, abdominal pain, weakness, or other signs of maternal distress.

Each puppy is enclosed in a sac that is part of the placenta or afterbirth. You may not notice any after births, since it is normal for the female to eat them. The hormones in the placenta help with milk production, but I find if they eat too many after births it can give the bitch a tummy upset for a few days.

A lot of breeders prefer to help the bitch, especially first time mums, break open the sac and break the umbilical cord which looks a bit like stringty membrane. It is important that you ensure the puppy's mouth and

nostrils are clear of any afterbirth or membranes. Remember the puppy is born in a fluid filled sac that usually breaks during birth. If the puppy is delivered still in the sac, break it as quickly as possible. Clean the puppy's face and nostrils and you can gently blow on its face to stimulate breathing. If the afterbirth is still intact, you may need to tear the cord, it is best to carefully squeeze the cord towards the puppy to get the blood into its circulation, then crush the cord between your thumbnails to break it. Do not pull the cord nearest the puppy as this could cause a hernia. Hold the puppy in a towel and gently rub it until the hair starts to dry. The puppy should then start to breathe normally. The tongue should be pink and once it is breathing normally, you can offer it to the mother. If she is more interested in delivering further puppies, place the puppy in a box with a warm water bottle covered by a towel. Be sure to cover the puppy with a warm towel to keep it warm.

It may be difficult to obtain an accurate count of the number of afterbirths since most dogs will eat them quickly unless you are there to intervene. However, if the afterbirth is not passed, contact your vet as he can give an oxytocin injection to help everything come away.

If the mother has a bloody or smelly vaginal discharge twenty-four to forty-eight hours after delivery, veterinary help should be sought.

Delivery Problems - stalled labour and delivery problems depend on which type of inertia is involved.

Primary Inertia Single puppy syndrome – if there is only one puppy, it may not make enough ACTH and cortisol to start the labour and contractions, Inadequate amount of calcium in the mother, Large litters can stretch the abdominal muscles too far so they cannot contract properly, toy breeds can become too excited or nervous at the beginning of labour, stopping it from progressing enough to cause contractions.

Secondary Inertia - poor muscle tone can slow or stop the contractions because the muscles are not able to provide enough strength; this is usually caused by obesity or age, Improper placement of puppies in the birth canal, Large litters can exhaust the mother so she cannot continue without assistance, Extra-large puppies can get stuck in the birth canal, Birth canal blockage such as from previous injury or infection

Once all the puppies are born offer your bitch a drink and a light meal, although some bitches are ravenous, some don't eat much for a few days. The bitch can suffer from nutritional deficiencies during lactation as her physiology will prioritize the utilization of nutrients. The top priority is lactation and puppy growth, and she will deplete her body reserves at the expense of her own health for that purpose, therefore, all nutrients are needed in increased amounts. As a rule of thumb, at peak lactation you should increase a bitch's dog food intake by 30 percent per puppy above what is usually required to maintain her body weight, although a lot of breeders prefer to feed free choice.

Some commercial dog foods do not contain sufficient nutrient density, especially caloric content, to support lactation. It is very important to provide the bitch with a high-energy food to provide all of the necessary nutrients to keep mum and puppies healthy.

Retained Afterbirth/Placenta

The placenta is the organ that connects the developing puppies to the mother during her pregnancy. Generally, this is expelled shortly after the pup during the third stage of the birthing process. In some cases, the

placenta may not get expelled, which can cause infection within the uterus which can quickly become toxic. This condition is seen most often in dogs with difficulties during birth, in the birthing of large litters, and in toy breeds, and should be addressed as speedily as possible to prevent further damage to the mother or the nursing pups. If caught early enough, your vet will administer an oxytocin injection to help clean out the bitch.

Most ultrasound technicians will offer a service whereby they will come out and scan your bitch to ensure there are no placenta remains or even live (and very rarely dead decomposing) puppies.

The most telling sign that there is still placenta retained is a greenish or dark discharge from the vaginal canal that continues for 24 hours or more after giving birth. Unlike the normal discharges that occur during birth, the discharge from a retained placenta may have an unpleasant odour. Other symptoms may include: Depression Fever Lethargy Loss of Appetite Neglect of Offspring.



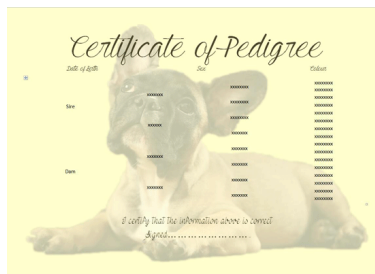
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