



Canine Pregnancy Scanning

The Whelping Process

The physical signs of labour can include pacing, panting, and extreme restlessness. The Bitch will also 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.

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 afterbirth 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 stringy 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 an 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.

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**Julie Growcott
07977 155642**