



Whelping Puppies

Whelping puppies basically refers to the process of a pregnant dog giving birth. After your dog has mated and become pregnant the time between pregnancy and birth is about 63 days – although this can vary by six days. This should give you enough time to find an appropriate area for your dog to nest and feel comfortable and settled before the whelping period starts.

We always recommend that you ask your vet to be present when your dog starts to give birth as there is always a possibility of complications. However, some experienced dog breeders will feel comfortable without any veterinary support immediately on hand and will support their dog to give birth independently.

In the weeks and days before your dog gives birth you might see some changes in your dog's behaviour – it is not uncommon for your pooch to lose her appetite and even vomit occasionally (it is no different than it is with humans) so if you have given birth yourself you may be able to show more natural empathy towards your pet prior to her whelping. Just prior to your dog whelping puppies it is very common for your dog to lose her appetite completely – this is very common and it can continue during lactation i.e. when she is providing milk for her new-born puppies.

It is normally recommended that in the weeks before she gives birth your vet may recommend that you increase the amount you feed her by as much as a quarter or a third (after all she is eating for two or more now)! It may also be a good idea to feed her small amounts throughout the day rather than one large meal. The reason for small amounts of food rather than one large meal is that your pregnant dog's uterus might be taking up more space in the abdomen making small meals more appropriate. Speak to your vet for advice as all dogs are different.

It is also important that your dog is not overfed during her pregnancy – in fact it takes up to three weeks for the fertilised eggs to actually attach themselves to the wall of the uterus – so some experts argue that the need for additional nutrients is negligible until the sixth or seventh week of pregnancy – but speak to your vet for advice.

The need for extra nutrients during the sixth and seventh weeks is important because failure to provide adequate nutrients may affect your bitches health and the health of the unborn puppies (leaving them at risk of being born smaller or at worst malformed or even still born). A good method

to use when working out how much you should feed your pregnant dog is to increase her food provision by 10% per week from the sixth or seventh week into the pregnancy. Puppy food is to be feed. The extra calcium is good for bones; protein is good for the tissue growth.

Tips for Whelping Puppies

1. When whelping puppies it is vital that your dog is as relaxed as possible – your aim is to make the experience of giving birth an enjoyable and comfortable experience. You should start by finding a place in the House that is warm and quiet (you don't want any noise to scare your dog). Make sure that you have plenty of bedding (we advocate using a large box that your dog can nestle in). Place some newspaper inside the box – this will not only soak up any leakage it will also be something that your dog can tear up when she starts whelping. Expect to see your dog shredding the newspaper during the birthing process.

2. You should get ready to be on hand for your dog for anything up to twenty four hours. So make sure that you have plenty of food and drink on hand – you need to be as fresh and alert as possible. However, it is important to mention that some dogs can give birth much faster than others so it could all be over in a couple of hours – but it is better to be prepared in case it takes longer. Have fresh water and different foods for her.

3. It is not unusual for your dog to start panting when she starts whelping puppies – this is quite normal. You should also expect to see your pooch become restless prior (and during) giving birth. Your dog may refuse all food for 24 hours prior to whelping puppies.

4. When your dog starts to give birth (remember it can take up to 24 hours) your pooch will start to strain and show signs of contraction – please take a note when this happens. If your dog has not given birth to a puppy after one hour you should telephone the vet straight away (if you have not done this already)!

5. Normally a dark coloured sac of fluid will start to appear at the head of your dog's vulva just prior to the first puppy being born. The dark coloured sac of fluid will also be wrapped inside another fluid filled membrane. At this point during the birthing process the first puppy should be born – if you do not see the first puppy then you can help a little – this will involve very gently holding the puppy's head or hind legs (if it is being born backwards) – use a clean and dry flannel (one that you use on your face). Now gently pull downwards and backwards away from the spine – do not use any force and always try to pull at the same time as your dog strains.

6. After the puppy is born the mother should start to lick and tear open the sac straight away to release the puppy – after the puppy is released from the sac the mother should lick and clean the whelp (puppy) until it is clean and dry. If the mother does not do this then you will need to do this for her by holding the puppy upside down so the fluids can drain from the lungs.

7. At this point when your dog is whelping puppies – the afterbirth or placenta (which is a liver like tissue). The mother will instinctively like eat the placenta and will also try and lick up and clean up the leakage and fluids. Expect to see green and brown fluids.

8. If your puppy is still attached to the placenta and the chord has not been severed then you can do this for your dog – do this by tearing it with your fingers but make sure that you don't pull on your puppy's abdomen or tie the cord a cm or two away from abdomen and cut the side attached to the placenta. It is also important that you count the amount of placentas that have been passed as there should be one for each puppy – a placenta that has not been passed can be very dangerous. Make sure you contact your vet if you think that a placenta has not been passed.

It is also important that 24 hours after your dog has finished whelping puppies you ask a vet to call by and just check your dog and the puppies.

Make sure mum goes to the toilet every few hours to prevent infections and stays feed and hydrated during pre-birth, birthing and when feeding. The pups first 48 hours are curtail and full attention should be provided.

Free range pooches nz

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