

Special Considerations for the Pregnant Bitch

There are several recommendations that I have for your bitch while she is pregnant:

- She should be on Interceptor heartworm prevention, not Heartgard
- You should start feeding her SMALL breed puppy food, regardless of the breed of your bitch from when you know she is pregnant until she weans her pups. It is NOT necessary to supplement otherwise, unless you have had problems with eclampsia in the past.
- She cannot be updated for any vaccines except Rabies during this period.
- She should be dewormed for hookworms and roundworms mid-pregnancy.
- Also make sure she is free of external parasites- Advantage is safe and will protect the pups after they are born too.

It's Time!

Remember that gestation is 63 days +/- 7 days. Every bitch is different, and can be different each pregnancy. Usually larger breeds carry pups longer. I recommend radiographing the bitch about day 58-60. This way we can make sure that the puppy heads will fit through the pelvis, and can count pups for you.

Mom's normal body temp is 101-102 degrees F. but usually will drop to 99 degrees about 24 hours before she delivers. Also, she may develop some milk too. She will start "nesting" about this time. The bitch will pace, pant, collect toys, etc. in anticipation of her babies. When she starts contractions, her abdomen will be tight. As a general rule, pups should be born every 30 minutes or less apart, and the pups and placentas can come in any order. **It is normal to have breach puppies!** Actually, normal is 50/50 head first vs. tail first!

When should you call me? When it has been more than half an hour and no puppies have come, when she is straining very hard and nothing is happening, or if there is a puppy in the birth canal (you can see it) for more than 15 minutes. Sometimes mom may need to rest and/or drink water or eat food during labor. As long as she is comfortable, just monitor her. Complications include low calcium, lack of contractions, and dystocia (puppy stuck in canal). These issues need medical care!

Items you need for Whelping

-Mom will need a "whelping box" (plastic kids swimming pool is nice for larger dogs) or some similar area to have her pups. Somewhere quiet, warm, and is easy for mom to get in/out of to reach food and water. It should have sides high enough that the pups can't get out easily. Also, avoid thick blankets and towels that could smother a baby.

-You need a supply of dry towels to help dry pups as they come out. Pups should be rubbed across their ribcage to encourage breathing.

-You need dental floss or string and some scissors to help cut the umbilical cord. It should be tied about ½ inch from the pup's belly, tied adjacent to that, then cut in between your ties.

-You need a bulb syringe to suction mucous from the back of the pup's mouth (not nose).

-Other supplies: heating pad for pups to lay on (Make sure they do not lay directly on a hot pad!), Nutrical or similar product to rub on pup's gums as needed to give them extra nutrients and sugar, and also a bottle and some formula in case mom is slow nursing or does not have enough milk.