

Pregnancy in the Bitch



Once pregnancy is suspected confirmation can be provided by your veterinary surgeon by two methods:

1. Abdominal **PALPATION** best done at 3-4wks
2. **ULTRASOUND** scan from 3-4wks onwards

Abdominal palpation between 5-6wks can be difficult. Generally speaking, pregnancy in the dog lasts for 63-65 days. A litter is very **DEMANDING** on a number of levels – commitment in time, physically tiring and emotionally draining. Preparation for the arrival of puppies starts well before they are due.



WHELPING AREA

Identify a suitable area for the bitch to have the puppies. This area should be **QUIET** and **WARM** so that she feels safe and secure. Ideally introduce the bitch to this area in the days prior to the whelping. Some people will have specialised areas and boxes called **WHELPING BOXES** and these have safety modifications to ensure mum can't lie on the puppies and that the pups are confined to a designated area.

WORMING

Bitches will pass **WORMS** to the puppies by two means – through the **PLACENTA** before being born and through the **MILK** after birth. It is thus very important to worm them during pregnancy and again with the pups at 2-3wks of age. Make sure the wormer is safe to be used.

FEEDING

During the latter stages of pregnancy the bitch's stomach will be unable to cope with large volumes of food at a time. Small **FREQUENT** meals should therefore be offered 5-6 x daily. The amount of food should be substantially increased once the puppies have arrived and this food should be concentrated in **CALORIES** to avoid weight loss for the mum. Producing all that milk and cleaning up after the pups is very calorie consuming!!!!!!

WHELPING

Signs that your bitch is about to whelp include restlessness, inappetant and seeking solitude. Milk can usually be expressed 2-3 days before whelping. A clear discharge may indicate labour has begun. It is very important **NOT TO PANIC!!!!!!**. There are 3 stages to labour although there is not always a clear separation from one stage to the next. **STAGE ONE** is when the cervix dilates and contractions commence. At this stage the contractions can be felt by the bitch but they are not visible to you. Ultimately a water sac will be visible at the vulva. In **STAGE TWO** visible contractions will push the puppies down the uterus and make an entrance into the world! . This can

cause extreme discomfort. The puppy will still be attached to the bitch via the umbilical cord. The bitch will normally bite this as she cleans up the



puppy. **STAGE THREE** is marked by the arrival of the placenta and green discharge. This usually occurs within 5-20 mins of the puppies' arrival. There may be a pause between puppies and this is quite normal. Generally all puppies are produced within 12hrs of the first puppy. It is important to keep everything

CALM and **QUIET** with minimal interference. Try to match a placenta with each pup but be aware that the bitch may eat the placenta. It is also important to watch for any pups born in intact water sacs – release asap and massage the chest to eliminate any inhaled fluids. Try to ensure that all puppies suckle from the bitch within an hour of being born

You should contact the surgery for advice immediately in any of the following situations:-

- If a coloured **DISCHARGE** is produced prior to a puppies birth
- If there is more than one hour of significant but unproductive **STRAINING**
- If straining stops with no puppy produced
- **EXCESSIVE BLEEDING** or a nasty offensive discharge is produced

Most importantly enjoy your new arrivals and if in doubt please phone for advice on **01698 861180** during **surgery hours** and **0141 332 3212** out of **Hours and weekends**