

BREEDING

Female dogs complete the "estrus cycle" every 6-12 months, depending on many factors. **Most** dogs repeat the cycle every 6-9 months. The "heat cycle" generally begins at 7-12 months of age-- the age of "puberty". Don't worry if your pet does not show a heat cycle until one year of age--this can be normal. It is important that you do **NOT** breed until at least ONE year of age, or the second heat cycle to insure proper development of the female dog. The period of estrus ("heat") is approximately 21 days. The dog is usually receptive to the male only during the second week. Most breeding occurs from the ninth to the twelfth day.

If breeding is not desired, the dog must be confined and restricted from male dogs for the **ENTIRE** three-week period since ovulation can occur at any time. Some animals, especially pets, will not stand for the male, and must be physically held or bred artificially. These dogs must have close veterinary supervision, using vaginal smears examined under the microscope, to determine the proper breeding time. If dogs do breed, we recommend breeding every other day as long as the female will accept the male to insure the best size litter. After a "normal" breeding, the dogs may remain "**TIED**" together for up to 30 minutes.

Occasionally, the male dog will turn around, making the dogs look "end to end". This is **NORMAL** and to be expected, and is no cause for alarm. Since pregnancy represents a considerable strain on the female, we do not recommend breeding every "season." Acceptable breeding programs include breeding every other "heat", or breeding two consecutive "heat cycles" and then skipping the third.

If pregnancy results from the mating, the puppies will be due in about 63 days. Begin counting from the first breeding. Remember that 63 days is the average. Your dog may vary three days either way. We recommend examining all pregnant females that go over three days past the due date.

Before a planned breeding, the female should be checked for intestinal parasites and be current with vaccinations. She should be fed a high-quality commercial dog food and supplemented with **Pet Tab™ Vitamin Tablets**. **Pet Cal™ Supplement** should be started during the last three weeks of pregnancy, and continued until the pups are weaned.

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

X-ray can be used to diagnose pregnancy 45 days after the breeding. Milk generally will form in the breasts 1-3 days before delivery due date. Make a "whelping box/bed" (4' x 4' and 6" tall). Temperature should be maintained around 80 degrees F. Use shredded newspaper for bedding. Place bedding in a secluded, but familiar area of the house. A child's plastic swimming pool is ideal. Clip the hair around the breasts and vulva. Wash these areas before whelping to insure good hygiene. Twenty-four (24) hours before the onset of labor, the rectal temperature will usually drop from 101.5 degrees to 100 degrees or less.

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When labor nears, the dog often will dig and make a nest. Excessive panting and/or vomiting should be noted. If this occurs, or if uncontrollable tremors develop, notify the CLINIC. This can be a sign of low blood calcium, which can result in death of your pet.

The next step is **ACTIVE LABOR**. Usually, dogs have puppies with no difficulty. Problems do, however occur, and WE are always available for advice or assistance. If hard labor goes on for two hours with no sign of delivery, call us. Straining, bearing down, and pushing are the signs of active labor. If a puppy's head, feet, or tail can be seen, and the puppy is unable to be delivered in 15 minutes, please call us. If everything appears normal, **LEAVE THE DOG ALONE!!** Noise and movements often distract the dog so that she does not concentrate on delivering and/or nursing the pups. A green or black vaginal discharge with no pup delivered indicates a problem, call the clinic. If the female is bred to a male dog larger than herself, the puppies may be too large to be delivered without assistance. Many times when the male is a mixed breed, he will be carrying "genes" that will result in very large pups--causing a life-threatening problem. The pup is usually delivered in a "sac", but a small green sac of fluid may appear before the pup is delivered. If the female doesn't break the sac, after the pup is delivered, you must very quickly or the pup will suffocate. Wipe off the pup with a clean towel, cleaning the head and mouth first. Keep the pup's head down lower than the body to help fluid drainage. Leave the umbilical cord **ALONE** for 30 minutes. You may cut the cord one inch from the body **IF** the female doesn't do it herself. Tie the cord with sewing thread before cutting. The female may rest 30-40 minutes between delivering each pup. Sometimes, this period may extend up to one hour on large litters. Pups often come in pairs, with a longer period of time between delivering each pair. If a period over three hours has occurred, contact the **CLINIC**. Make sure the pups nurse within two hours after birth. When the female dog is done with delivery, she will rest and nurse the pups. Food and water should be available to her. Take her outside to exercise and relieve her. Some dogs make poor mothers and will not let the pups nurse. Some dogs will actually kill the pups--especially if very nervous. This is one reason it is important to keep the environment as quiet and calm as possible. Do not let children or friends handle the pups or stand around to observe. The female should be brought to the clinic for examination within 24 hours after delivery. Bring her during the first normal clinic hours the morning after delivery. She will receive hormone injections to contract the uterus, as well as, a uterine douche to prevent infections. We also want to be sure she has milk available some females do not produce milk, or worse yet, develop "mastitis", which is infected milk.

Puppy tails are docked and dewclaws removed at 3-7 days of age. Puppies should be dewormed at four weeks of age, and vaccinations started. Start feeding the pups at 3-4 weeks of age. Use 2% milk mixed half with water to moisten Gerber High Protein Baby Cereal to form a "mush." Strained baby food is also a good starter diet. A commercial puppy food of **HIGH QUALITY** should begin to be substituted gradually for the baby cereal after one week.