



**GRAND AVENUE**  
VETERINARY CLINIC

# WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOUR DOG IS EXPECTING

## Facts About Caring for Your Pregnant Dog

- Most dogs whelp 62-64 days after **ovulation** date, **not** date of breeding.
- You should increase your dog's food intake starting three weeks prior to the due date. It should be increased gradually so that she is eating about 1-1/2 to 2 times her normal amount on the due day. **No other supplements should be given.**

- When your dog's rectal temperature drops below 99° F, she will probably begin delivering the pups within 24 hours.
- The first pup should be passed within 4 hours of the onset of labor and a pup should be passed every 2 hours afterwards.
- The mother should remove the amniotic sacs from each pup as they come out. If not, you will need to do this for her.

The excitement of your dog having a litter of puppies can be thrilling. However, pregnancy is as serious a medical condition in dogs as it is in people. Proper care of your pregnant bitch is essential for having a successful litter.

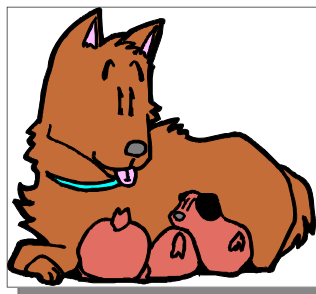
## When is She Due?

This is the most important part of the birthing process, and unfortunately many people do not understand the proper means of calculating a dog's due date. Almost all bitches whelp 63 days after **the day they ovulate**. Date of breeding has nothing to do with the whelping date (besides making the dog pregnant, obviously). Working closely with your veterinarian during the breeding process will help you determine an accurate whelping date.

## Is Nutrition Important?

The answer to this question is, "Absolutely!" The bitch will begin building up milk for lactation about three to four weeks before whelping. It is at this time that you need to start increasing the amount of food available. By the time she whelps she should be

eating 1 1/2 to 2 times as much food as normal. Some veterinarians also advocate using puppy food because it is more calorically dense. However, you should not switch the diet until 3 weeks prior to parturition. Feeding her too much too early will make her obese and she will be at greater risk for birthing difficulties.



This level of feeding should persist to 2 weeks after whelping, at which time she should be cut back again.

## How do I Know When She's Going to Give Birth?

Accurate determination of the whelping date helps you know when to begin monitoring. About two days before the date, you can take her rectal temperature every 6 hours.

Bitches experience an acute, brief body temperature drop to below 99° F about 24 hours before whelping.

## What Do I Do When She Starts Whelping?

Usually, nothing. However, this is the period when the mother will be at greatest risk. Once she starts labor, she should produce a puppy every 2 to 4 hours. We recommend contacting a veterinarian if she appears to be having contractions but has not had a pup in over 3 hours. Also, if you see green discharge but no pups, this is an indication that the placentas have separated and the pups may be without oxygen.

After each pup is whelped, the bitch should tear away the amniotic sac and lick the puppy to stimulate breathing. If she does not do this you may need to tear the sac off yourself and stimulate breathing by rubbing the pup gently but briskly with a towel. You may also need to aspirate fluid from the pup's nose with a bulb syringe.

## IS THERE ANYWAY TO KNOW HOW MANY PUPS ARE COMING?



In fact, there are several methods of determining this, all with varying sensitivity. The best means of early pregnancy detection is an ultrasound performed on the 24th day after ovulation or later. However, it isn't always the most accurate means of de-

termining the number of pups, especially if there are a lot of them.

The best means is an x-ray taken after the 45th day after ovulation. At this point the x-rays can no longer harm the development of the fetuses.

This diagnostic allows us to count skulls and spines, giving us the best chance for an accurate count (though, again, a large number of pups may make this difficult). Some radiographic signs can also give us some hints about fetal viability as well.