



# WHELPING AND AFTER CARE OF YOUR BITCH & PUPS

**VET**SERVICES  
HAWKE'S BAY

## WHELPING AND AFTER CARE OF YOUR BITCH & PUPS.

### PREPARATION FOR WHELPING

Pregnancy in a bitch lasts approximately 63 days. Two weeks prior to the birth the bitch should be given a routine worm treatment as well as 2 weeks after whelping.

A whelping area should be prepared for her. The usual arrangement is a box with sides as high as the bitches' elbow and large enough to allow the bitch to lie down comfortably, ie. Sides 50% longer than the bitch is. Newspapers make excellent bedding because they can be changed easily, are very absorbent, and can be shredded by the bitch as she makes her nest. The box should be placed somewhere warm and free from draughts and somewhere she will be quite happy to stay.

### THE LABOUR

As the due date draws closer there will be some obvious changes in your pet. She will get larger and more swollen in the abdomen. She may tire easily and lie down more (but it is still important to give her regular exercise). She may start to produce milk in the last 7-10 days, and there may be a clear mucus discharge from the vulva. If the discharge is cloudy or green contact your veterinarian ASAP.

#### STAGE ONE

During the first stage the mother seems extremely restless. She may appear nervous and seek seclusion. She may refuse food. This stage may last 6-24 hours.

#### STAGE TWO

In the second stage contractions start, the bitch will usually lie down. The first pup will arrive soon after the first contractions become frequent and strong. Usually the first puppy is born within one hour, although up to 2 – 2½ hours is normal. **IF SHE HAS BEEN STRAINING FOR ONE HOUR AND THERE IS NO SIGN OF A PUPPY CALL YOUR VET ASAP.** The puppies may be presented nose first, lying on their stomachs or hindquarters first, both of these are normal presentations. This stage usually last between 3-6 hours.



## STAGE THREE

The third stage is the resting stage which follows each delivery. Mild contractions and passing of the afterbirth occur at this stage which usually lasts 10-30 minutes.

Subsequent puppies are born within  $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour of regular contractions and straining recommencing after this resting stage. If contractions continue for more than one hour and there is still no sign of subsequent puppies, call your vet ASAP. After delivery the bitch will open the sac, clean off the pup and bite the umbilical cord. Maternal instinct is strong and there is little need for human intervention.

## PROBLEMS

- If a puppy seems lodged in the birth canal and the mother is unable to expel it, grasp the puppy and exert steady, firm traction. Do not jerk or pull suddenly. If you cannot remove the pup after five minutes call your vet.
- After a pup is delivered, if the bitch does not clean it herself make sure that the pup is freed from the sac and there is no mucus clogging the mouth and nose. Rub the pup vigorously with a clean towel to dry it and stimulate breathing. After a few minutes the pup should begin to squirm and cry. Return it to the bitch as quickly as possible.
- If there is weak intermittent labour for three hours without any pups call your vet.
- If there is a greenish black discharge and no labour or puppies, call your vet.
- If your bitch is still straining after a pup was born and no new pups are born in two hours call your vet.
- If the bitch ceases to have contractions after this time and you are concerned there may still be puppies to come, contact your vet as an x-ray may be used to confirm.

## POST WHELPING

### THE BITCH

Your bitch may be tired for a few hours but will quickly recover and start looking after the pups. She will discharge blood stained fluid for a few days to a few weeks. Now is the time to start feeding her as much food as she wants, up until the pups start to eat solid food. Feed her a good quality medium breed puppy food. This is to ensure she receives the calcium required which she passes onto her puppies when they are feeding.

Eventually your bitch will start to lose patience with the pups. Weaning usually occurs at 6-8 weeks of age. Your bitches' next season will be due about four months after the pups were born. Now is the time to consider spaying her if you do not want more pups.

## THE PUPS

The pups will be small, blind and totally dependent on the bitch for food and warmth. Their eyes will open by about 10 days. Healthy pups should be fat and happy. They should either be sleeping or eating. If the pups cry a lot they are probably not getting enough to eat and supplementation may be necessary.

Healthy pups should put on at least their birth weight every ten days – weigh some at birth to monitor their progress. The bitch and pups should be wormed two weeks after birth and then the pups regularly wormed at 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 weeks of age, and then at 4, 5, 6, 9 and 12 months.

## SUPPLIMENT FEEDING OF PUPS

Generally, pups will feed until satiated. If they cry excessively, or appear restless, they may not be receiving enough milk. Please contact your veterinarian if you think a pup/s is not receiving enough milk.

If supplementation is required there are commercial supplements available at the clinic

**Amount to feed:** 1ml per 7 grams of bodyweight daily

### **Frequency:**

Week 1	8 times daily, <i>ie. Every 3 hours</i>
Week 2	6 times daily, <i>ie. Every 4 hours</i>
Week 3	4-5 times daily, <i>ie. Every 4-6 hours</i>
Week 4	4-5 times daily, <i>ie. Every 5-6 hours</i>
Week 4 to weaning	3 times daily

Work out the total volume of feed required from the animal's bodyweight and then divide it by the number of feeds daily.

### **Example:**

A two-week old pup weighing 140 grams divided by 7 grams = 20mls per day in six feeds and so needs 20mls divided by six feeds = 3½mls each feed.

**If you have any questions of concerns regarding your pregnant dog or her puppies, please call one of our clinics today.**