



healthy pets, happy lives

Fur Life Vet provides health and wellbeing information for you to help care for your pets throughout their lives.

Your girl is pregnant and is due to whelp her puppies soon.

Before the time comes there are a few very, important things that need to be organised first.

1. Your bitch will need to be feed a very well, balanced diet, high in calcium, protein, mineral and vitamins. Having puppies uses a lot of energy during whelping and this energy needs to be replaced.

This is done by feeding the correct food. It is recommended to feed your bitch a good quality puppy food. Avoid calcium supplements during pregnancy

2. She will need somewhere warm, dry, safe, quiet, and out of the weather and any draughts to whelp her puppies. Your bitch should be inside when whelping her pups and the best place to whelp them is a whelping box.
3. You should have a carry crate with a hot water bottle just in case something goes wrong during the whelping, and you need to go to the vets, as any puppies already born will need to go with mum.
4. The most important thing to get ready is yourself. You need to be calm, organised and have time to spend with your bitch before, during and after the whelping. Most importantly you need to be prepared for the worst. If something goes wrong during delivery and the mother cannot care for the pups you will need to become their mother.



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Preparing for The Arrival of Puppies



Preparing for whelping

Introduce your bitch to the area where she will be having the pups at least a week or two before the due date.

Your bitch's behaviour will start to change a few weeks before birth. She will start to nest (making an area to delivery her puppies), this will become more noticeable closer to the due date. She will start lactation (producing milk) from the back teats about 5 to 6 days before whelping and the very front teats 12 to 24 hours before whelping.

Some bitches will go off their food 12 to 24 hours before whelping, but not always.

She will start to lose a creamy or clear thick discharge from about 24 to 48 hours before whelping, this is the cervical plug and should not be discoloured (green).

The first stage of labour your bitch will become restless, start panting, pacing, digging and may even start to shiver or vomit.

Second stage of labour the bitch's water will break, and a puppy **should be born within 20 to 30 minutes**, but it can take up to 2 hours, **if a puppy has not been delivered in this time ring your vet.**

Once the puppies start to arrive, a puppy should come every 20 to 30 mins, **if 1 hour has passed between puppies ring your vet.**

If at any stage of the whelping the bitch becomes very, uncomfortable, (straining to deliver a pup unsuccessfully) or showing sign of stress and is losing a green sometimes smelly discharge ring your vet immediately.

Once all the pups are whelped, she should settle down and feed the puppies, it is very, important that the pups have a feed of mum with in the first couple of hours of being born. Mum milk contains colostrum and this only lasts for 24 hours. This contains all the nutrients a puppy needs to build up their immunity and to give them a good start in life.

Whelping box

A whelping box needs to be big enough for the bitch to be able to lay down fully stretched out. The floor needs to be covered so the bitch is not on tiles, concrete, or lino. It should have something to keep the cold out like a piece of carpet or a good not slip matting and lined with newspaper during the whelping. Once the newspaper becomes wet remove it and replace with fresh paper. The bedding used need to be easy for the pups to grip but it should not be easily crumbled as the pups could get tangle up and be suffocated or squashed by mum. Some good flooring for whelping boxes might include:

- Rubber mats.
- A piece of carpet (marine carpet is good as it can be hosed clean).
- Vet bed (with rubber backing)

During the whelping stage a rubber mat covered in newspaper is great as the rubber mat will stop the cold from the tiles or concrete and can be wiped clean when the bitch has finished whelping and a suitable blanket/ rug can be placed on top of the rubber mat to keep the pups warm.

The area where the whelping is taking place needs to be warm, at all, times, as puppies cannot regulate their body temperature until around 3 weeks of age.

If a puppy gets too cold, they cannot feed properly and will slowly starve, so it is very, important to keep their area warm.

A pup whose body temperature is not maintained can suffer from fading puppy and in many cases the puppy will die.

The bedding in the whelping box needs to be changed at least once a day or more often if it becomes wet or soiled.

Some bitches like to have someone with them when whelping.

So, a good idea is to have a chair, or a camp bed set up in the whelping room so you can monitor her during the delivery and be at hand if something goes wrong.

Always be prepared for the worst and hope for the best. Being fully prepared will make whelping a better experience and will keep you calm.

Being calm is most important as it keeps the bitch relaxed. We hope all goes well with the delivery of your puppies. Remember we are only a phone call away.

Supplementary feeding pups

After a caesarean some bitches will not have sufficient milk supply to support her puppies. If this is the case, you will need to start supplement feeding until the bitch's milk comes in.

The best way is to bottle feed the puppies.

Before supplementary feeding commences, the pups should be **weighed**, and their **temperature** taken. **A cold puppy will not** feed correctly and should be warmed slowly.

The puppy's temperature should be between **34.5 and 37 degrees** before you start to feed.

Over feeding your puppy can lead to milk aspiration or milk not being digested properly which can result in diarrhoea.

This is a guide to hand feeding puppies using Di-Vetelact puppy milk.

All bottles and teats need to be sterilised before feeding puppies and need to be rinsed between pups.

If hand rearing pups they need to be feed every 2 hours initially (day and night). They need to be toileted after feeding. (They need to urinate and defaecate each feed). To achieve this, you will need to use a piece of damp cotton wool or baby wipe and gently wipe the vulva or penis from front to back until the pup urinates.

To make them defaecate use the same method making sure you only wipe over the anus especially with the female pups.

| Weight of Animal | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|--------|
| 100g | 200g | 500g | 1 kg | 5 kg | 0 kg | 20 kg | 50 kg | 100 kg |

| Total Daily Feed Volume | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------|--------|--------|----|------|------|------|----|
| 30 ml | 60 ml | 150 ml | 300 ml | 1L | 1.6L | 2.8L | 5.4L | 9L |