



## WHELPING

The act of delivery or whelping is a perfectly natural process for many dogs, but there are exceptions where normal birth is extremely difficult or sometimes impossible. It is important to detect and predict difficulties ahead of time so veterinary intervention is possible. If this is the case, advance arrangements for admission to the hospital will be made. In all other instances it is desirable for whelping to take place at home in quiet familiar surroundings.

A special box (either cardboard or wood) roomy enough for both mother and puppies should be available three to four days in advance of whelping. The box should be situated in a place that is out of household traffic, yet easily accessible. Several thicknesses of newspaper make the best bedding to use in the box. Some other items to have on hand are:

- 2-3 old cotton towels
- Heating pad or hot water bottle and small cardboard box (to keep puppies in until whelping is complete)
- Cotton balls or gauze sponges
- Spool of clean white thread
- Tincture of Iodine
- Sharp scissors (sterilize with alcohol)

## PRE-LABOR PERIOD

Signs of pre-labor can occur anywhere from 8 to 24 hours prior to true labor. This period is identifiable by the following signs:

- Dog usually refuses food
- Rectal temperature falls to between 97.5 and 99 degrees
- Uneasiness is apparent and attempts for seclusion may be made
- Nesting behavior may be observed along with pacing, frequent urination and panting

## LABOR PERIOD

During true labor you will observe definite abdominal contractions. The dog may lie on her side and strain or sometimes strain while assuming a squatting posture. Should these signs persist for longer than two hours without a puppy being born, notify the hospital.

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Shortly after the onset of true labor, you should notice the appearance of a distended membranous sac at the vulva. This is the bag of water or placenta. It indicates that delivery of the first puppy is well underway. With continued straining the pup will be delivered. The mother will usually chew the sac from around the pup and sever the umbilical cord. Continued licking of the puppy stimulates respiration and crying.

If the mother fails to break the membranes immediately after delivery, you should do so yourself. Use the thread to tie off the umbilical cord approximately 1-1/2 inches from the abdomen and sever it with the scissors. Brisk rubbing with a dry towel should be continued until the puppy is crying vigorously. After the puppy is breathing normally, the umbilical stump should be painted with iodine. Place the puppies in a small box (next to the mother or where she can easily see them) containing either the hot water bottle or heating pad (lowest setting).

Puppies are normally spaced at half hour intervals although one-hour intervals are not unusual. When whelping is completed, the mother will lie down relaxed and free of contractions. She should be given the opportunity to urinate and then return to her puppies to nurse. You may also offer her a small portion of food and water, though she may refuse to eat or drink.

## **DANGER SIGNALS**

The following signs may indicate trouble so call the hospital immediately if they appear:

- Dark red discharge prior to delivery or a dark greenish discharge prior to delivery
- Failure to produce a puppy after two hours of labor
- Contractions continuing for longer than an hour between puppies
- Unusually severe contractions or pain
- Extreme depression and cessation of labor

## **POSTPARTUM CARE**

Please call the hospital and make an appointment for the mother and puppies to be checked within 24 hours after whelping. Any additional instructions will be given at that time.

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