

Whelping Advice



Whelping is a natural process for the bitch and most give birth without complications. It is important however for owners to recognise when there may be a problem, to help prevent loss of puppies or even the bitch. It is advisable for owners to quietly monitor their bitch while whelping but interference is best kept to a minimum.

Normal Whelping

You should be aware of a rough date that the puppies are due. In the last week of her pregnancy you may wish to take her temperature daily, her temperature will normally drop from around 39 to 37 degrees Celsius, this is a sign that the bitch is likely to whelp within 24 hours. Other signs that your bitch is close to whelping are, restlessness, excessive panting, trembling, loss of appetite, slight vomiting and nest making. You may see a clear watery discharge from her vulva and usually she will give birth within 12-24 hours.

The next stage begins with abdominal contractions and the bitch will lick excessively at her vulva. She will usually lay on her side and pant heavily between contractions, resulting in the delivery of a puppy. The first puppy should appear within 1 hour of the start of the contractions and subsequent puppies should be produced within no more than 30 minutes of abdominal straining, you may wish to note the start of the contractions and the time of each puppy. The bitch may rest between puppies and this can be for up to 4 hours with no concern providing she's not actively contracting.

Bloody vaginal discharge is normal once the bitch has started to whelp. On delivery of the puppy she will lick, clean and stimulate the puppy to breathe, with each puppy born an afterbirth should be expelled, this may be attached to the puppy or follow after. If the afterbirth is attached then the bitch will normally break it off herself and then eat the placenta. It is important that an afterbirth is accounted for each puppy.

It is not uncommon for one or two puppies to be stillborn, these should be removed from the area. Once the bitch has finished whelping she will then relax and settle down to nurse her puppies.

A greenish discharge is normal post whelp and this is normally followed by a brown-red discharge and can be seen for up to 6 weeks.

Abnormal Whelping

You should contact your veterinary surgery if...

- There has been a decline in rectal temperature but no other signs of whelping within 24 hours.
- Your bitch is showing no signs of imminent whelping after 70 days post mating.
- Green/brown or smelly discharge is noted prior to your bitch whelping.
- The bitch has been contracting regularly but no puppies have been produced within an hour.
- More than 4 hours between foetal deliveries if you think there are more puppies to come
- More than 30 minutes of forceful abdominal straining without signs of a puppy.
- Complete absence of abdominal contractions after the bitches waters have broken.
- The vaginal discharge becomes black or foul smelling.
- Profuse vomiting or diarrhoea
- Temperature above 39.7 degrees Celsius
- Red and hot mammary glands or blood stained milk.
- Your bitch becomes weak, wobbly or collapses.