Caring for Your Pregnant Dog

Following are answers to some of the questions you may have when your dog is pregnant:

What is the whelping date of my pet’s litter?
The litter’s whelping date is approximately 63 days after your pet’s ovulation date. If you do not know the ovulation date, the whelping date is 56 to 72 days after breeding.

What should I expect on whelping day?
Your pet will go through 3 stages of labor:
- In Stage I, she will be restless and will not want to eat. She will begin to “nest,” and her body temperature will drop below 99°F. Stage I lasts approximately 12 hours.
- Your pet will alternate between Stages II and III as strong active contractions begin during stage II, resulting in the birth of a puppy, followed by passage of that puppy’s placenta and fetal membranes in stage III.
- Puppies typically are born approximately 1 hour apart. The length of stages II and III depends on the litter size.

How do I know if my pet is having difficulty giving birth?
- She was bred more than 70 days ago and is showing no signs of labor.
- Stage I labor has lasted more than 24 hours without the delivery of any puppies.
- She has not given birth to any puppies and has black or green vaginal discharge.
- She is bleeding during any stage of labor.
- She has had active contractions for more than 1 hour without delivering a puppy.
- She is not having active contractions and more than 3 hours have passed between the birth of puppies.
- She is acting distressed, seems ill (e.g., lethargy, prolonged anorexia, vomiting, diarrhea), and/or is weak.

How will the veterinarian help my pet?
The veterinarian may perform the following tests to determine why your pet is having difficulty giving birth.
- Vaginal examination to feel for puppies lodged in the birth canal
- Abdominal radiography to determine how many puppies are present and whether any puppies are poorly positioned for delivery
- Abdominal ultrasonography to count each puppy’s heart rate, because slow heart rates indicate that the puppies are in distress and may need veterinary intervention

The veterinarian may help your pet give birth by taking these actions.
- Manipulate the puppies in the birth canal to assist with delivery
- Use medications to help increase uterine contractions
- Deliver puppies via cesarean delivery

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