

First, you need to know the term "whelping". This means giving birth in the canine dictionary. We similarly use the word "queening" when a cat delivers kittens. It is extremely important to ask your veterinarian if your particular type of dog has any special problems when it comes to whelping. Most breeds of dogs do absolutely fine without human intervention, but there are a few that have real problems. Boston Terriers and Bulldogs instantly come to mind. These breeds, because of their physical characteristics, often have a very difficult time delivering puppies and more often than not, a Cesarean section is needed. Most breeders of these dogs will even schedule a C-section with their veterinarian rather than wait for problems to occur. So ask your veterinarian about your particular pet and we can let you know if you are in for any special circumstances.

The majority of "bitches" (female dogs) really do quite well on their own when they whelp, and many times if we try to intervene we can make things more difficult. So here are some guidelines to simplify the process:

1) Be sure there is a quiet place for her to have the puppies. Often times in the later stage of pregnancy the bitch will start to "nest", or make a spot for herself. She may pick a closet, under a bed, the corner of a room, or her normal dog bed. Let her pick the place, don't force her into a place that is uncomfortable.

2) Once she has picked a place, it is nice to try and put a wooden barrier around the area so that after she has the puppies they won't wander off by accident. Just some simple plywood 1" by 12" or something similar will do nicely. Be sure the mom can easily jump in and out of what we will now call the "whelping area," or "whelping box".

3) Most dogs deliver their puppies right around 60 days, usually between 60 and 64 days. If you really want to be prepared for the event, when you have reached 60 days after the dog was bred, you can take her temperature in the morning and at night (you have to do this rectally; it is very easy, just ask your veterinarian to show you how). Once her rectal temperature has dropped below 100 degrees Fahrenheit, you can be pretty assured she will deliver the puppies in the next 24 hours. And yes, it is true that more times than not the puppies are delivered at night.

4) There is a theme developing here; the bitches like to make their nests in small, quiet areas and they like to have their puppies at night. They like for things to be quiet and uneventful. My advice to people once they believe the dog is close to giving birth is the following:

- Leave them alone as much as possible.

- Allow them all the time they want in their whelping area

- When they do start have some puppies just be very quiet. Watch from a distance and let nature do the work. If you want your children to observe, keep them from making too much of a noise or too much fuss.

- Keep the room lit, but a little dim. This will keep the dog soothed, as well as keep the children and adults in the room a bit calmer.

What to look for in the birth of puppies, click here....