



Whelping

The three stages of labour in the dog are very distinct and can be characterized as follows:

Stage 1

Stage 1 labour will often last for 6-12 hours and should not exceed 36 hours. Signs include discomfort, restlessness, and extreme nesting (ripping up newspaper, towels and bedding to create a 'den' in which to whelp the puppies).

Stage 2

Stage 2 labour can last 3-12 hours in total. Signs include the breaking of waters, intense contractions and abdominal straining, and the delivery of puppies.

Indications to seek veterinary advice or intervention during stage 2 labour include:

- No puppies produced within 2-3 hours of waters breaking.
- Weak, irregular straining for more than 3 hours.
- Strong, regular straining for more than 20-30 minutes.
- Production of significant discharge without an accompanying puppy.
- More than 3 hours between the birth of puppies.
- More than 12 hours has passed since the breaking of waters and not all puppies have been born or abdominal contractions are continuing.

What to do with the puppy when it has been born:

- If membranes (placenta) are not broken, and the mother is not actively attempting to open the sack, intervene and break the membranes so the puppy can breathe.
- Ensure every puppy is produced with, or followed by, a placenta
- Tear placenta at umbilical cord if bitch does not do this. This can be done by tearing with your nails approximately 2 cm from the puppy's belly.
- If there is excessive bleeding from the umbilical cord, apply pressure to stem the bleeding and call for immediate veterinary advice
- It is important that there is minimal handling of the puppy in the period after birth, allowing the animals to be with their siblings and mother.

Stage 3

The placentas are usually passed with each puppy, or within 15 minutes of each delivery. Stage 3 labour will involve the passage of any remaining placenta and the bitch will begin to settle and rest. At this stage, it is important to ensure all puppies have time suckling on the mother.

Discharge from vulva after birth:

Vaginal discharge may continue for up to 3 weeks after giving birth, and is often green or brown in colour. Veterinary advice should be sought if the discharge appears bloody or if it had a putrid odour.

Please be aware that whelping normally lasts for approximately 6 hours, sometimes takes up to 12 hours, and should never exceed 24 hours. While it is important to keep an eye on how things are progressing, it is equally important to allow your pet a calm, comfortable and quiet environment in which to give birth.

If you have any other questions or concerns about whelping or your pet's health in general, please speak to one of our friendly staff members.