



WINDSOR  
ANIMAL HOSPITAL

707-838-3031

[www.windsoranimalhospital.com](http://www.windsoranimalhospital.com)

## **Birthing Puppies**

- Preparation for whelping
- Labor & Deliver (whelping)
- Post-natal care

Begin preparations for delivery of puppies before the mother gives birth. A whelping box should be provided for the mother to begin sleeping in to ensure birth of puppies in the area you have chosen. This box should be relatively small, with sides 6-8 inches high to keep the pups from crawling out of the nest. Place the box in a secluded yet familiar area of the home, away from the family traffic, to allow the mother solitude.

Newspapers make excellent bedding because they can be changed easily, are absorbent and can be shredded by the mother as she makes her “nest”. If such materials as old quilts, blankets, rugs or towels are used, they must be washed frequently.

If you want to know more precisely when birth of the puppy litter is near, check the rectal temperature of the mother twice daily from the 58<sup>th</sup> day of pregnancy until labor begins. Normal rectal temperature varies between 100.5 and 102.F. Within 24 hours before the onset of labor, the rectal temperature drops nearly 2 degrees.

### **Labor and Delivery (whelping)**

Labor in the female dog can be divided into three stages. The second and third stages are repeated with the birth of each puppy.

Stage 1: During the first stage, the mother seems extremely restless and very nervous, and often seeks seclusion. She may refuse food even if offered her favorite treats. This stage may last 6-24 hours. This is a good time to walk the mother outdoors to allow her to urinate and defecate. Try to encourage her to drink as dehydration during delivery will result in dystocia (inability to push the puppy out of the birth canal).

Stage 2: In the second stage, contractions and expulsion of the puppies begin. Usually a small greenish sack of fluid protrudes first from the vulva. This is followed by the puppy and its attached placenta. The normal presentation of the puppy is nose first, stomach down. About one-third of all puppies, however, are born hindquarters first. This presentation is considered normal in the dog.

After delivery of a puppy, the mother opens the sack, cleans off the pup by licking, chews the umbilical cord in half and then chews and swallows the sack (placenta). Make sure the sack is removed from the puppy immediately if it is unbroken during delivery as the puppy will die if it cannot breathe. A person can tear the sack open with their fingers if the



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mother does not do so with her teeth.

Stage 3: The third stage of labor is the resting stage, which follows each delivery. Mild contractions, and delivery of the afterbirth occur in this phase. This stage usually lasts 10-30 minutes, but it may range from a few seconds to an hour.

### **Assisting with the Birth**

If a puppy becomes stuck in the birth canal, you can often extract that puppy with a clean towel wrapped around the puppy so your hand does not slip off, and then exert steady, firm traction. Do not jerk or pull suddenly. Traction may have to be applied for as long as 5 minutes. If you cannot remove the puppy, call Windsor Animal Hospital.

After a pup is delivered, remove all membranes covering the puppy with your fingers, clean the face and remove mucus from the mouth and nose (a bulb syringe helps a lot at this step). Rub the puppy with a clean towel to dry it and to stimulate respiration and circulation. After a few minutes of rubbing, the puppy should begin to squirm and cry loudly.

If the umbilical cord is not chewed off by the mother and a person has to cut it, first tie the umbilical cord with dental floss or fine thread, about an inch from the puppy's body and then cut on the side of the knot away from the puppy. Apply a drop of iodine or methiolate to the cord end after it is cut, to avoid infection.

### **Notify Windsor Animal Hospital if any of the Following Occur:**

- You cannot remove a puppy lodged in the birth canal.
- There is strong, persistent labor for 30 minutes without delivery of a pup.
- There is weak, intermittent labor for 6 hours without delivery of any puppies.
- It has been more than 4 hours since the last birth and it is probable that more puppies are still inside.
- There is a greenish-black discharge and no labor or puppies within 3-4 hours. The greenish-blackish color is normal, but such a discharge should be followed very soon by the delivery of the pups.
- The pregnancy lasts more than 65 days.



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## **Postnatal Care:**

### **Behavior of the Mother**

During whelping and nursing, your pet may not be her usual self. She may be very nervous and filled with a sense of protectiveness for her new family. Any aggression she may exhibit usually fades as time passes.

### **Care of the Mother**

Pregnancy and nursing puppies constitute a severe strain on the mother's health. The stress of lactation is greater on the mother's body than pregnancy.

Usually no special diet is required, but the mother will require approximately twice as many calories as normal. Feeding the mother a puppy growth formulations is often a good choice.

### **Puppy Care**

Within 48 hours after birth, the mother and puppies should be examined by a veterinarian at Windsor Animal Hospital.