

Natural Advice for a Smooth Delivery

Helping your dog birth healthy pups

By Kristina Fleming, DVM, CCH



The arrival of puppies is often a time of excitement and joy, but it can also be fraught with anxiety.

Learning more about the delivery stages and post-natal care while using homeopathy can help alleviate owners' stress as well as support a healthy entrance for the pups and a smooth birthing process for the mother.

Anticipating the delivery date

Predicting the anticipated delivery date is based upon the knowledge of the breeding date(s), which isn't always possible. The canine gestation period is typically 63 days but varies from 58 to 70 days. Of course, breeding does not ensure a pregnancy; dog owners should be aware of the possibilities of pseudopregnancy when their dog exhibits signs of pregnancy—nesting, swollen mammarys, or milk production—or pyometra, a life-threatening uterine infection. During the third trimester, many veterinarians recommend a radiograph to assess the number and size of the pups. This information may prove valuable during delivery.

Monitoring and preparing

Designate a whelping/birthing box or area with ample space for the mother and pups that is easy to clean. Line the box or area with puppy pads or newspaper for quick cleanup, and add comfort with blankets and towels, preferably those you can launder. Introduce the mother to the space and help her feel comfortable. Have a gentle bulb syringe, unwaxed/unflavored dental floss, towels to clean newborns, and your homeopathic remedies on hand. Prepare for the big

day by monitoring the mother's body temperature, measuring rectally twice daily for the last week of pregnancy. Her temperature will usually drop to 98 to 99°F at 12 to 24 hours before delivery. Talk with your veterinarian about the upcoming delivery to coordinate any questions or urgent needs you might have during the process. Check out *When to Seek Help*.

Understanding the delivery stages

The canine litter varies greatly in size, so knowing the expected number of pups helps you determine when the mother would benefit from help. There are three stages of delivery, similar to humans, but as the mother delivers the pups, she will cycle through stages two and three repeatedly, sometimes delivering one pup at a time and sometimes two to three in quick succession. She may rest between pups for up to two hours.

- **Stage one – Preparation:** Physically, the cervix dilates, and the vulva swells. Mammary gland development may begin a few days earlier. The mother might decline food, appear nauseous (licking lips or salivating), or even vomit. Emotionally, she may be restless and anxious, pacing, panting, or trembling. She may practice nesting by moving blankets and choosing a resting place. See *Helpful Delivery Remedies* on page 31 for remedies that may help her progress.

- **Stage two – Contractions and uterine/vaginal discharge:** Discharge colors vary from pale yellow to blood-tinged to greenish. Contractions should produce

a puppy within 30 minutes. The mother typically nips away the sac, permitting the pup to breathe, and severs the umbilical cord.

- **Stage three – placenta expulsion:** It is crucial to confirm that you see a placenta for each pup! A retained placenta may cause infection. Monitor the mother, as she may try to eat the membranes, which can lead to stomach upset later.

Caring for newborn pups

The mother usually clears away the amniotic sac and clips the cord, but if she is actively in labor, you may need to assist. Remove the membranes and stimulate breathing by gently rubbing the pup's

When to Seek Help

Call your veterinarian for professional guidance if you observe any of the following symptoms:

- No labor/contractions 24 hours after the body temperature drops or a clear discharge begins
- Strong contractions for 20 to 30 minutes without the expulsion of a pup
- Foul, bloody, or brownish discharge
- Mother is too tired to proceed with contractions (and you know there are more pups!)
- Pup is lodged in birth canal without progressing

Helpful Delivery Remedies

Use a 30c potency and give two to three dry pellets by mouth per dose. You can also dissolve two to three pellets in eight ounces of water and give ¼ to ½ teaspoonful as a dose.

Aconite – mother: acts scared and has low milk production; pup: unable to breathe at birth

Arnica – mother: experiences painful uterine bleeding during or after delivery and has retained placenta; pup: may be bruised following a difficult passage through the birth canal (e.g., large pups, small moms)

Arsenicum album – mother: restless, anxious, pacing, and experiencing nausea and vomiting (see Stage one on page 30); pup: non-responsive

Caulophyllum – mother: tired and struggling to push with weak, ineffective contractions; she may need professional help if two to three doses don't make a distinct change within a short time

Carbo vegetabilis – pup: limp, poorly oxygenated

Cimicifuga – mother: scared, anxious, tired, and struggling to push with weak, ineffective contractions; she may need professional help; use when *Caullophyllum* does not help

Pulsatilla – mother: predominantly yellow vaginal discharge; difficult and non-progressing labor; she is emotionally needy, seeking comfort from her owner or staying with the pups constantly

Bach Flower Rescue Remedy® – add liquid drops to the water bowl; the mother is unlikely to drink much during labor, so one to two sprays into her mouth may be helpful; the owner can also use it to alleviate their anxiety

chest with a clean towel. Tie off the cord about an inch from the body wall using the dental floss. If a pup has difficulty breathing, gently open its mouth with a clean finger to clear any contents or use the bulb syringe to remove mucus. 💧

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Kristie Fleming, DVM, CCH, trained at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine and has practiced small animal medicine across her home state of Virginia. Seeking a more holistic approach to health, she studied classical homeopathy at the Academy of Homeopathy Education and is certified by the Council for Homeopathic Certification. Today, she practices at Life Abundant Homeopathy (lifeabundant.us).

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