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## Whelping or Parturition

### Determining the time of parturition

- Start taking a rectal temperature about 5 days before expected time of whelping, do this in the morning and evening.
- Compare the temperature to the one done 24 hours before.
- The temperature will drop one degree (often to about 99° F) in about 85 % of bitches about 24 hours before parturition.
  - If a planned caesarian section is to be done it should be performed within the next 24 hours.
- Close to all bitches will have an increase in temperature of about 1 degree from the base line that was determined a few days prior to whelping, this occurs about 6 hours prior to whelping.
- Stage I labor usually last 6 – 12 hours but may go as long as 36 hours
  - Bitch is often restless, may show nesting behavior.
  - She is nervous, panting, anorexic, and may tremble or shiver
- Stage II of parturition is when the puppies are pushed out
  - It will last 20 minutes to 1 hour per puppy
  - No more than 2 hours should elapse between each puppy born
  - It tends to last longer the first time the bitch whelps.
  - Stage II usually lasts a total of 3 to 6 hours but may go as long as 24 hours.
  - Puppy presentation is 60% head first with the head between both front legs, the other 40% the back legs will come first and this is normal.
  - As the puppy engages the cervix and anterior vagina it causes uterine contractions, you will often see the bitch actively pushing at this time.
- Stage III of parturition is the delivery of the expulsion of the placenta
  - Expulsion of the placentas follows the pup(s)
  - You may see pup – placenta – pup – placenta or pup – pup – placenta – placenta.
  - The female will often eat the placenta
    - This can cause an upset stomach in some females
    - There has not been any benefit shown from the bitch eating placentas
    - If the whelping is attended the placentas are usually gathered and thrown away.
  - It can be difficult to tell the difference between resting in Stage III and the completion of parturition.
    - Radiographs prior to whelping are very valuable at this time.

### **Dystocia (Whelping problems)**

- Predisposing factors to a difficult delivery
  - Bulldogs
  - Single pup
  - First time whelping
  - Very large litters
- When to be concerned
  - 30 minutes of strong contractions with no pups delivered
  - 2 – 3 hours of weak and infrequent expulsive efforts failing to produce a pup.
  - 4 or more hours between pups
  - Obvious problem (pup hanging out, etc.)

- Failure to assist and get professional
- Potential problems include
  - Primary uterine inertia
    - The uterus never starts to contract normally
  - Secondary uterine inertia
    - The uterus becomes fatigued or stops its normal contractions
    - Possibility of needing a C-section at this point is high
  - Obstructive Dystocia
    - Malposition or large fetal size
    - Manipulation or C-section is usually necessary
    - All manipulations need to be done very sanitary to prevent contamination of the uterus and metritis.
- Whelpwise
  - Whelping monitors for dogs
  - Very accurate to determine the beginning of uterine contractions
  - Can diagnose problems with Inertia and obstruction
  - Helps to determine the best time for C-section if a known date of LH surge is not available.
  - [www.whelpwise.com](http://www.whelpwise.com)

Please feel free to call. We love making puppies so let us help. 435-381-2539 or 435-637-8387