

## Whelping and Supplies

by Debby Rothman

So much of the material available on whelping is over the top, addressing scenarios that rarely happen. I think the main thing to remember is it's a normal, natural process; the body is programmed for the process.

I have a whelping kit I carry along 24/7 the week prior to due date. It's actually a big plastic ice cream bucket with the lid, which makes it handy to carry, keeps everything clean and can be useful during whelping for various functions - like holding puppies while another is being born. It's nice to keep the puppies dry during whelping, rather than getting wet again as more puppies are born, but lots of times removing the puppies makes the dam anxious. The main thing is to keep her as happy as possible.

- Paper towels
- Garbage sack.
- Plenty of newspaper
- Old towels
- Several 'rice bags'
- 2 Hemostats
- Small scissor
- Betadine
- Bulb syringe
- #200 crate

My expectant dams go with me everywhere the week prior to due date. I take their temperature twice a day and record it. Normal canine temperature is around 101.5. This drops in expectant mothers and hovers around 99-100. 24 hours prior to whelping, the temperature will drop a full degree, generally to 98. You'll probably see other signs before that. Restlessness. Nesting. However, some of my dogs have whelped puppies without showing signs. I have also sat up all night long with a bitch, sure she was going to start anytime, only to be up the following night when she's actually whelping. So, I've learned to just go about my life, taking the dog, crate and whelping supplies with me. She sleeps next to me in her crate. She's with me at work. She's in the car while I'm running errands.

I monitor, rather than interfere, although I always tear the sack away from the head if the mother hasn't accomplished this during the birth. Make sure the puppy's head is upwards when you do this, as you don't the fluids from the sack flowing into the nostrils as the puppy takes its first breath. The placenta is often delivered later. I let my mothers eat the placentas. I make sure every placenta is delivered. Until the placenta is delivered, the puppy may still be attached by the umbilical cord. Sometimes the mother will lay quietly, licking the puppy. Sometimes she won't. If I become concerned about the puppy 'dangling' while still attached, I'll clamp the hemostats on the cord, cut the cord between the hemostats. After a few seconds, I remove the hemostat attached to the puppy. I leave the hemostat still attached to placental end as is until the placenta is delivered. I do **NOT** give 'clean out' shots. I am a firm believer in Mother Nature's design in the birthing process.

During whelping I use the 200 crate, making adjustments for each mother. I have the bolts unscrewed, slipping just several screws back through the holes. That way I can pop the top off quickly. Some dams will settle into the crate; some won't. I try different things, like sitting on the floor with her, top off. No drama, just quiet. It's usually in the middle of night. I have a blanket, pillow and book for myself.

I keep the hemostats and scissors in betadine solution during the whelping process, the rice bags warm. You can make 'rice bags' by filling old socks with dry, uncooked rice. To warm them, microwave them for 2 minutes. I keep a warm puppy nest ready at all times, placing a towel over the rice bag, just in case the bitch will let me remove her puppies as the next one is born. I rarely use the bulb syringe, but keep it on hand in case a puppy inhales birthing fluids. If a puppy is slow going, I'll hold it in my hand on a tilt, helping the fluids drain from the nostrils and mouth. I rub the puppy vigorously, especially near the lungs and ribs. Do not 'swing' the puppy, which is a commonly used (deadly) technique.

The other old school thing I've completely given up is use of heating pads or heating lamps; they dehydrate the puppies. If the mother is warm and comfortable, her body heat keeps the puppies warm. For the first few days, I keep a rice bag next to one side, on the outside, of the crate. I nuke the bag whenever it's convenient, probably several times a day. After whelping is done, I put the crate in a 2x3 playpen, with the floor pan placed on top of the floor grid. That way I can easily reach the puppies. Depending on the dam, I either use just the bottom of the crate or the entire crate minus the door, proving a more den-like atmosphere. I wrap the sides of the 2x3 with a sheet so she's not disturbed by the house dogs walking by.

As time goes by, I 'grow' this environment, removing the sheet, switching to a 2x6 ex-pen, with the crate at one end, mom's food and water in the middle and newspapers at the other end. This sets the foundation for house-training, keeping the three areas - food/water, sleeping quarters, potty area - separate from birth. Eventually I transition them to the end of the hallway, blocking off that area with a pen panels. And then to downstairs. And on and on.

Saw this and thought the idea was great!



Taken from the ad:

The [Newdog whelping system](#) gives puppies a safe, clean and hygienic start in life. Made from strong, double walled, environmentally friendly cardboard, these whelping boxes are designed to be disposed of after use, avoiding any concerns with contamination from litter to litter. The naturally good insulating properties of the cardboard keep puppies safe and warm. The polished aluminum making them very durable and bacteria resistant.

The Newdog "No Ruck" whelping mats eliminate the danger of puppies becoming trapped underneath the bedding. Made from thick, high quality fleece bedding stitched to a waterproof base material and a polypropylene inserted stiffener, these whelping mates have established an excellent reputation with dog breeders worldwide. They are machine washable and dryable. Available in 5 sizes to fit any breed. Available at [Cherrybrook](#).

The following was compiled during a discussion on the ApsoBreeders list.

Faye asked:

As I am finally starting to get things organized and settled I have a few questions.....

What do you guys all like to keep in your whelping supplies? I haven't kept anything in one place and am having trouble locating everything - that has been solved with the purchase of a large rubbermaid container.

Cathy wrote:

- 6 small hand towels
- Roll of paper towels
- 1 dozen cloth diapers
- Large bottle Betadine
- Large denatured alcohol
- 4 Kelly clamps (large curved hemostats)
- 2 curved surgical scissors
- Several packages dental floss
- Small rubbermaid type soft plastic dishpan (to hold pups if you need to)
- Whelping box (about 24" x 36")
- Infra-red heat lamp
- Scale sensitive enough to accurately measure to nearest gram, up to 500 grams.
- Notebook, pen, ruler
- Neonatal bulb syringe
- Newspapers (torn lengthwise in long strips)

To Cathy, Shirley wrote:

Shame on you, you forgot to include Digital Camera. I know yours can't be far from the whelping box, given the wonderful pictures you have taken of new litters.

Cathy replied:

I use a Nikon D-200 with a 18 - 200 mm.lens. I use an sb400 flash bounced off a paper hood Which I make myself.I apply about +1.3 F stops correction to compensate for the bounce. The bounced flash gives a soft light without harsh shadows. The distance to the subject varies, but with the zoom, it is usually at least 4-6 feet. The photos are usually cropped from the 10 megapixel original - to afford the best composition and get rid of distracting elements.

