

General Care for Pregnant Dogs

***These are general guidelines for caring for your pregnant dog/cat. This is not a replacement for seeking consult from a veterinarian. We always recommend speaking to a veterinarian about treating your pet.

Starting the fourth or fifth week of pregnancy, begin feeding the pregnant dog puppy food (do NOT use large breed puppy formulas)). Start mixing her normal food in with puppy food slowly, so that by the end of her pregnancy, she's just eating puppy food. By the middle of her pregnancy, start feeding her 3 times a day. She may need to eat small meals every 3-4 hours during the last week of the pregnancy because the puppies do the most growing in the last two weeks of the pregnancy.

During the last week of pregnancy and the first 3-4 weeks of nursing, she might eat 2-4 times the amount she ate before pregnancy. As long as she is gaining a healthy amount of weight and not becoming fat, it is ok for her to eat that much. The goal should be for her to weigh the same when she gets done nursing as she was before she got pregnant, as long as she wasn't underweight before.

If she has fleas or worms, it is usually better to treat the mother before the puppies become exposed after birth. Please contact a vet or community outreach about the best way to treat a pregnant dog for fleas/ticks/worms.

The Delivery

Dogs typically like to have a "den" to deliver the puppies in. A round kiddie pool is easy to keep clean and is a good size for large breed dogs. Be careful with blankets because puppies can get tangled up.

During labor and immediately after, most female dogs are not interested in eating. However, she should start eating about a day after the last puppy is born and will probably eat a lot. Nursing a litter of puppies takes a lot of energy and Mom must eat enough to provide for her newborns, so let the new mom eat as much as she wants.

New moms are very protective of their young, so only let one or two people to check on her. Having your friends and neighbors over to handle and play with the new puppies is stressful on the mother and can potentially spread disease to the puppies. For their safety,

don't have people visit the puppies until they are at least four weeks old. Please keep other animals in the home separate from the new mom and babies as much as possible. This helps prevent the spread of disease and limits the stress on the mom.

Feeding Recommendations for Nursing Dogs

Feeding a good dog food may be good enough but it is recommended to feed the new mother puppy food. This can provide extra calories that the dog needs to make more milk. Make sure to keep your dog's food bowl full at all times and let her eat as much as she wants as long as she is not getting fat. Some new moms can eat up to two to three times their normal amount while they are nursing.

After about a month, the mother dog will begin weaning her litter and you can start lowering the amount of food you are giving her and switching her back to adult food. By about eight weeks, the pups should be pretty much weaned and the mom should be back to a normal amount of her adult food.

Pregnant Dog that needs to gain weight:

- You can see ribs
- You can see hip bones



Normal Pregnant Dog:

- You cannot see rib or hip bones
- Dog has a full or rounded appearance